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African Violet
MAGAZINE

November • December 2004 Volume 57 Number 6

AVSA Information

FOR CONDUCTING BUSINESS WITHIN YOUR SOCIETY

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MEMBERSHIP DUES INCREASE EFFECTIVE OCT. 1, 2002:

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AFFILIATES: Chapter - $27.00; Council, State or Region - $27.00.

MEMBERSHIP AND PROMOTION: Send ideas, offers to help, requests for assistance to Carolee Carter, 10947 SW 71st Circle, Ocala, FL 33476. *E-mail* carolee37@earthlink.net

AFFILIATES: For information on Affiliates or how to organize a chapter, write Bev Promersberger, 7992 Otis Way, Pensacola, FL 32506. *E-mail* promers22@hotmail.com

AVSA OFFICE: Jenny Daugereau, Administrative Coordinator, 2375 North Street, Beaumont, TX 77702, 1-800-770-AVSA; 409-839-4725; FAX 409-839-4329. Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. CST. *E-mail* avsa@earthlink.net

AVSA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION: Dr. Elmer Godeny, 7004 Government St., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

BEST VARIETIES: HONOR ROLL COMPILER Floyd Lawson, 20719 Madrona Ave., Torrance, CA 90503.

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CONVENTION PROGRAM: Send special requests for workshop programs or interesting speakers to Linda Owens, Convention Director, 1762 Stemwood Drive, Columbus, OH 43228. If interested in sponsoring a national convention in your area, contact Convention Director.

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ARTICLES BY MEMBERS, COLUMNISTS AND MEMORIALS: Send to Editor.

Please Note: Deadlines - Articles and Columnists: Jan. issue - Oct. 1; Mar. issue - Dec. 1; May issue - Feb. 1; July issue - Apr 1; Sept. issue - June 1; Nov. issue - Aug. 1.

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"AND THE WINNERS ARE...": Send show results to Mary Corondan, 7205 Dillon Ct., Plano, TX 75024.

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QUESTION BOX: Ralph Robinson, P. O. Box 9, Naples, NY 14512. *E-mail* robsviolet@aol.com and Sue Haffner, 3015 Timmy Ave, Clovis, CA 93612-4849. *E-mail* sueh@csufresno.edu

MASTER VARIETY LIST:

MVL SUPPLEMENTS: will be published in the AVM. Send any correction and/or description of new cultivars with hybridizer's name to Joe Bruns, 1220 Stratford Lane, Hanover Park, IL 60130.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS: Sent to Associate Members and New Members only. Renewing members receive card on white protective cover of AVM.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE: AVSA Secretary, Nancy Hayes, 9 Cobblestone Rd., Bloomfield, CT 06002-3003.

PLANT REGISTRATION: Janice Bruns, 1220 Stratford Ln., Hanover Park, IL 60203-2667. *E-mail* janice@qwip.net

QUESTIONS ON HYBRIDIZING: Dr. Jeff Smith, "In Search of New Violets" The Indiana Academy, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306. Web site: avsa.org

RESEARCH: Send suggested projects for scientific research or names of interested, qualified potential research personnel to Dr. Jeff Smith, 3014 W. Amherst Rd., Muncie, IN 47304.

SHOW ENTRY TAGS: 100 - $8.00 postpaid. Order from AVSA Office.

SHOW SCHEDULE APPROVER: For information on Shows, AVSA Awards and Approving Schedules write to: Patricia Sutton, 5341 S. 73 E. Ave., Tulsa, OK 74145. *E-mail* sutpa01@worldnet.att.net. **Do not send Show Schedules by E-mail - this address is for information ONLY.**

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Hybridized by: **J. Smith**
Standard

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THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC. ORG. 1946

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Every attempt is made to keep articles technically correct. Since the growing of fine African violets can be achieved in many ways, the methods and opinions expressed by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of AVSA.

President's Message

Dear AVSA Members,

Many of us are in the midst of fall African violet activities. Affiliate groups have begun their new program year, and some are busy with shows and exhibits before the cold weather arrives. Regional groups are holding their annual conventions, and African violet friends are visiting and sharing leaves of their newest "finds." Some are placing their last order of the year while commercials can still ship without risking damage from the cold.

Speaking of the weather, thoughts and prayers have been with our Florida friends this hurricane season. They have been "pounded" by both Charley and Frances. I hope all survived and have managed to put their lives back together. As much as we love our African violets, they are of secondary importance when faced with a threat of hurricanes of that magnitude.

I would like to alert you to several changes that have occurred within the Society in recent months. In the January 2005 issue of the *African Violet Magazine*, you will find a new columnist writing the article on miniature and semiminiature violets. Laurel Goretsky of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, will replace Pat Richards of Olathe, Kansas. Many thanks to Pat for her years of excellent, enjoyable articles. Pat also asked to resign as chair of the Commercial Sales & Exhibits Committee. I have accepted her resignation and appointed Kathy Bell of Tucson, Arizona, to the position. Kathy was convention chair of the Tucson convention in April. That experience should help her in this new job.

The lists of judges, affiliates, and commercial members, formerly found in the September issue of the *African Violet Magazine,* were not published there this year but instead are now available through the website. I hope all those who wished to see the lists were successful in sending an email message to the office (avsa@earthlink.net) to get the access code and downloading the lists from the site. For those who do not have Internet access, the lists can be requested from the office. Send your request with $1.00 for postage and handling to 2375 North St., Beaumont, TX 77702, and the lists will be sent to you.

The supplement formerly found in this (the November) issue consisting of the annual update for the Master List of Species and Cultivars (AVML) will also appear on the website rather than in the magazine. An access code will not be needed to view this information.

The website is growing by leaps and bounds with wonderful information available at your fingertips. In early September, Jim Owens, our webmaster, announced the availability of a partial index to the *African Violet Magazine*. Go to the "What's New" page for details and the "AVSA Magazine Page" to access this new feature. Jim had encountered a few "glitches" with the search function, but he recruited some help, and it all worked out fine. The database is the work of the Publications Committee, based upon the annual indexes compiled by Bill Paauwe. The committee members will be gradually working back through the years of publication to provide researchers with references to information of all kinds.

The holiday season is fast approaching. Do consider giving an AVSA membership to those of your friends who enjoy violets. It is a gift that provides pleasure all year. I plan to put the Tucson convention CD on my own wish list, and you may want to do so too. It's a great souvenir of a wonderful convention and show. That reminds me of another gift idea – airline tickets to Cincinnati for the 2005 convention. Hope to see many of you there. May your holiday season be a joyous one and the New Year one of peace and prosperity for all.

Happy Violeting.

Janet

Janet Riemer
President, AVSA

Editor's Notes

Ruth Rumsey
AVM Editor
2375 North Street
Beaumont, TX 77702
email: rrumsey@earthlink.net

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The AVML insert that usually appears in this issue, is now available on the AVSA website, <avsa.org>, and through the AVSA office. To order through the office, send one dollar along with your name and address, and it will be mailed to you.

The last column by "Thinking Small" writer, **Pat Richards**, is in this issue. Pat has written this popular column for nine years, sharing her techniques and thoughts about growing miniature and semi-miniature African violets. Thank you, Pat, for all the years of outstanding information, show reviews, and helpful hints to make us better growers. One of the comments I have often heard through the last nine years is, "Pat writes as though she's talking to me."

Taking over the duties of writing this column is **Laurel Goretsky**, an experienced violet grower from Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Laurel's first column will appear in the January/February '05 AVM. Laurel is a seasoned grower and a very good writer. I'm sure you'll all enjoy her columns.

A request for the article, "Jiffy Plant Stand from PVC Pipe" by **Ken Barbi**, has prompted me to rerun this informative article from the 1995 September/October AVM. The article gives very easy to follow, concise directions on building a plant stand from scratch. If you longtime AVSA members would like to suggest a column from a past issue that you feel would benefit our newer members, please let me know.

Our longtime advertiser, **Sonja's Violets**, has gone out of business. **Sonja Holm** thanks all of her loyal customers for the many years she enjoyed taking care of their violet needs, as well as for all the friendships she made through the business. A busy lady, Sonja will continue with her music, writing, quilting, and oil painting. We wish her well and thank her for all the years she supported AVSA by advertising in this magazine.

A couple of years ago, I "liberated" myself from the guilt of growing neglected African violets in my office. I just couldn't find the time to spend on plants that need more than water tossed on them once or twice a week, fertilizer every few months. It isn't that I don't know better - I read more violet-related articles than most people. But it didn't help my plants.

I tossed all of them out, and for a time, I did indeed feel liberated. No more miniature palm trees on the window sill, no more shoving the tortured little things into a box and in the closet whenever a *real* violet grower visited the office. I decided to be content with the common green houseplants that I hauled up the stairs so many years ago, the day I became editor. These plants seemed to be more forgiving, more tolerant of my neglect, all nice shades of green without a bloom or bud to be seen.

Each year I brought violets back from the conventions for friends, or maybe to donate to the office light stands downstairs, but none for me. Until this year. I only brought back two violets, but I also had that gorgeous yellow *Episcia* that **Gertrude Schneider** gave to me, and a tiny *Sinningia*, a gift from my friend, **Bill Price**. And, those leaves that **Ron Ennis** brought me from his home, and those from **Winston Goretsky**...and you know the rest of the story. Here I go again. I'm really going to try and do better on this go 'round...but just in case, the box that easily slides into my closet door is not far away. I just hope I get a phone call before another award-winning grower stops by...

I wish you all a wonderful holiday season, full of family, laughter, and friends.

Office Update

Jenny Daugereau
AVSA Office Manager
2375 North Street
Beaumont, TX 77702
email: avsa@earthlink.net

Affiliate clubs are getting busy after a slow summer. It is time to renew affiliate liability insurance again. Insurance is very important to your clubs because often, if you do not have liability insurance, malls, as well as city and county buildings, will not allow you to use their facilities. Please discuss this at your next club meeting and send in payment for your insurance as soon as you can. The cost will be the same as last year, $3.50 per member. I will be mailing the insurance renewal form and Affiliate update sheets in early November. Please fill out both and return them immediately. The Affiliate update sheet is very important. It will help AVSA to keep accurate records, and it will help Bev Promersberger, Affiliate Chairperson, meet the needs of our clubs.

Mandy Meza is our new office secretary. If you call the office, she will be happy to help you. Mandy is still learning the office procedures and all about AVSA, so please be patient and helpful. Let's all welcome her to AVSA.

Many of our members have been calling with requests for a replacement AVM because they have not received it as early as someone they know. The magazines are all mailed from the post office here in Beaumont on the same day. It can take up to three to four weeks from mailing date to arrive at your house. We do not consider the magazine late until three weeks from mailing date. The magazine usually goes out on or around the 20th of the issue month. Please give it those three weeks before calling the office for a replacement issue. To help make sure your *African Violet Magazine* gets to you as quickly as possible, check your magazine mailing label to make sure it is correct, and if you have a change of address, send it to us as soon as possible.

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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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6. In item 16, indicate the date of the issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
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Failure to file or publish a statement of ownership may lead to suspension of Periodicals authorization.

PS Form **3526**, October 1999 *(Reverse)*

Question Box

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Hello, friends. I hope you and your violets had a nice summer and are all prepared for whatever fall events you have in your area – fairs, fall shows, or plant sales. My violets are happy to survive our hot, dry summers and are relieved to experience cooler temperatures!

QUESTION: *Why do the outside leaves of my African violets turn yellow?*

ANSWER: It is normal for the older leaves of a violet to turn pale and die after a certain period of time. This probably depends on the variety and on the growing conditions. A plant that has been growing rapidly will no doubt 'ripen' the older leaves sooner than a plant that has been showing slower growth. My view is that, when a violet's outer leaves decline, it is time to repot.

However, if the leaves seem to be turning yellow prematurely, it may be an indication of a lack of nitrogen in the soil. The soil may be too acidic for the plants to absorb the fertilizer, or you may not have been supplying enough of the right kind of fertilizer. Again, I would recommend repotting. Take off the yellowing outer leaves and remove any stubs remaining on the stalk. If the roots appear healthy, repot into fresh mix, and, after several weeks, begin feeding with a quarter-strength balanced fertilizer. Your plant should respond with enhanced growth.

QUESTION: *What's the best way to tag my plants? I try to be conscientious about keeping the names with my violets – they all had names when I got them – but every once in awhile I find an 'anonymous' plant in one of the trays. Writing fades on plastic labels and washes off paper tags on pots. What really works?*

ANSWER: If I could come up with a surefire answer to that, I'd be rich! Seriously, plant growers of all sorts puzzle over this very issue. Like you, I've squinted at faded paper tags on pots wondering, "Glitter – what? Glittersweet? Should I guess?" (If you're entering the plant in a show, it's not a good idea to guess at the name!)

The ink in various marking pens will fade over time when exposed to light, even that in the specialty pens made for horticultural labels. A lot of growers have found that writing with plain, old #2 pencil is more permanent. I would recommend double-labeling your plants: put a label on the pot, but also write out a plastic label and push it down into the soil. Whatever you put on that tag will survive, even if the writing on the paper label fades or gets washed away.

QUESTION: *My husband and I have just moved to a new home in a semi-rural area. We've had to dig our own well, and I'm wondering if the well water is good for my violets.*

ANSWER: This is a good question for you to ask. Just because you are no longer on city water with all its additives, don't assume that well water is somehow purer or better for your plants. Groundwater in many areas may carry a heavy load of minerals – not bad, in itself, and not bad to drink – but likely to upset the chemical balance in your potting soil. Some water systems are threatened by contamination with agricultural runoff. Some friends of mine recently built their dream home in a nearby foothill community. An analysis of their well water, however, showed an unacceptable level of *E. coli* bacteria. Needless to say, they had to take care of this problem right away!

Like my friends, you will need to get a water quality assessment, if you haven't already done so. Get in touch with your county extension office and find out what they recommend.

I answer plant-related questions in several different contexts, and I always suggest that, when growers move to a new locality, they find out if there is a local Master Gardener program in their county. These folks are the true experts on gardening, both inside and out, in the area. Your extension office should know about the Master Gardeners, too.

QUESTION: *My African violet just broke off at the soil line. How can I save it?*

ANSWER: This sounds like the result of a serious case of root rot. Remove the outer rows of leaves, clean up the stalk, then cut the stalk back to healthy tissue. Let the cut dry briefly, then plant the crown in a starting mix – a perlite-vermiculite mix, for instance – and enclose the plant and pot in a plastic bag. Put the pot at the end of a shelf on your light stand, or on a windowsill where it gets good but indirect light. The crown should re-root in few weeks. Keep checking.

Root rot can come about by over-watering and/or the use of a too-heavy potting mix. Lighten up your mix with perlite, and make sure your plants don't stand in water for any length of time.

QUESTION: *I have small white marks on the leaves of my violets. The leaves get lots of pollen dropping on them. Would this cause the white marks?*

ANSWER: If you examine the leaves carefully I think you will find very small marks that look like fine scrapes or scratches on the surface. This damage is usually done by thrips. These insects live deep in the center of a bloom, and spilled pollen is their unmistakable "footprint". Thrips are easy to get and difficult to get rid of. We can bring them into the house inadvertently on our clothes and hands after we've been working in the yard. If you bring cut flowers inside, you run a good chance of bringing in thrips, as well.

My area is especially bad for thrips, and it's a rare local grower who has never had to deal with them. One way to find out the bad news: blow gently into a suspected blossom. This should inspire the critter to come wriggling out. Not an edifying sight!

Disbudding is generally recommended in treating for thrips. In fact, serious growers in our area keep their violets disbudded all year, until the run-up to the club show. (Of course, disbudding is also considered to be a requirement for the production of big, gorgeous show plants – but that's another story.) If you do have to fight an infestation, you will need to treat your collection (not just the suspected plant or plants) on a regular basis. You might want to try spraying with an insecticidal soap weekly for a few weeks. This might not eliminate the problem altogether, but perhaps will bring it under a bit of control. Keep vigilant for re-infestations, especially in the summer.

One grower has told me that, in addition to disbudding, she dips the whole plant in a solution of water and dish detergent (I think she uses Joy) to knock off any adult thrips that might have dropped on the leaves while she was taking off the flowers and buds. Finally, she sprays Raid House & Garden Bug Killer on the top of the soil. This is to take care of the young thrips and larvae, which are on the top of the soil, not deep down inside. She swears by this method.

Disbudding: what if you just can't bring yourself to do this? After all, that's what we grow our violets for – the gorgeous flowers. If you really don't want to disbud, or maybe only want to do it once, you can use a household spray, such as the above-mentioned Raid. Fog it over your plants so that the mist drifts down over the plants. Turn off the fan, if you have one in your plant room. Close up the room for at least an hour. Doing this every other week should keep the thrips in check.

You've no doubt heard before that you need to be careful when bringing new plants into your collection. Regardless of their origin, they could be harboring pests. Disbud all new plants. If you are really dubious about where they've been, you should consider repotting them and disposing of the soil that came with them. Don't re-use the pot without soaking it in bleach water.

QUESTION: *I just recently purchased a table top light garden fixture, one that uses two 48" 40-watt wide spectrum tubes. After about 7 months of use, the tubes now have dark rings at each end. The plant growing books that I consult say that you should change the tubes when they show those dark rings. But 7 months seems like a pretty short lifetime for the tubes. What do you think?*

ANSWER: While I'm no expert on light fixtures, I have heard that it isn't unusual for the wide spectrum tubes to develop these rings after relatively brief use. I believe they are still good for growing violets and other plants for at least a year. You might want to consider changing them at that time. But don't change both tubes at the same time, lest the plants be shocked by the sudden change in light intensity. By the way, be careful in disposing of fluorescent tubes. The phosphors that coat the inside of the glass can be considered toxic. If you accidentally break a tube, be very careful in handling the pieces. Use gloves. Don't get any of the 'powder' on your clothes. While I think most of us just throw these tubes in the garbage, I wonder if some localities may have them on their 'toxic waste' list, to be disposed of along with pesticides, paint, and other items. You might want to check on this, to be really careful.

QUESTION: *I have an old "no-name" violet with girl foliage. I have a devil of a time keeping it looking good, but I love the plant and want to keep it going. Do you have any tips on growing them?*

ANSWER: Congratulations on keeping your girl-leaved plant alive for any length of time, as many of us find them a challenge to grow. The definition of a "girl" leaf, from the AVSA Handbook, is: "Deeply scalloped leaves, usually rounded or heart-shaped with white to yellow markings at the base of each leaf. These markings can extend to the leaf blades and edges of the leaf."

Generally, you want to keep these plants in low light situations. In light gardens, keep the plants close to the end of the lights or even on just the very edge of the growing area. Some of the girl types produce tight, bunchy foliage if grown in good light. Believe it or not, they will bloom in these dim situations,

though they will not be as ever-blooming as plants grown directly under the lights. But if you love the plant, it is worth the trouble.

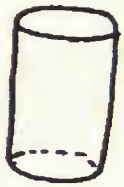
Do not foliar feed girl type hybrids; this only makes the foliage problem worse. You can improve the appearance of plants by thinning out some of the bunchy leaves. Don't leave any obvious bare areas, but do remove leaves that are balling up. Constantly groom old foliage; that is, remove any leaves on the outer row as soon as they show signs of age – yellowing, brown edges, limpness, etc. This will give room for the inner leaves to fall into the opened space.

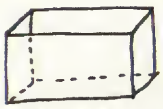
Plant your plant as high in the pot as you can get away with. You can't mound the soil and still show the plant, but if you are just growing it for your own pleasure, it doesn't matter. The goal is to make room for the lower leaves to spread out. This may seem like a lot of trouble, but it's worth it.

Underwater Designs

by John P. Nabers

An underwater design is the same as any miniature design that has been submerged in water. The elements and principles of design apply to underwater designs just as they do to any other design. The main difference is that those elements and principles must be preserved while being distorted by a water-filled container.

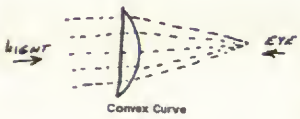

Cylinder Bowl


Rectangle Bowl

There are all shapes and size of glass containers. Many containers function similarly to a magnifying glass when filled with water. When constructing an underwater design, consider the amount of magnification the water-filled container will produce. The more curvature, the more distortion. A convex curve magnifies while the concave curve reduces magnification.

Bubble Bowl

Square (Pinched) Container



Convex Curve

The designer should choose stable materials that do not cloud or tint the water. Dyed materials will color the water when submerged overnight. Points are deducted for loose or floating material.

Construct the design on a base that will keep the material from floating when in water. Use a small flat rock which can be concealed beneath a layer of sand, gravel, or beads. Hot glue can be used to anchor the design to the base. Other items that can be used as a base are sea shells, petrified wood, coral, and glass.

Concave Curve

The simplest container tousle for an underwater design is the rectangular bowl because it magnifies the least. I constructed one fairly simple design with a brightly colored African violet blossom for the focal point, dark curved branches of a Nematanthus for the line, and monkey grass as filler material.

Simple Design

This little design was placed in a rectangular container filled with cold water. (Warm or tepid water can loosen hot glue and cause a design to float. Hot water is NEVER used.) This design has good line, has an African violet blossom as the focal point, and makes good use of the space.

For the bubble bowl, the same procedure is used to construct the design, but the design must be much smaller because this bowl curvature magnifies the design more.

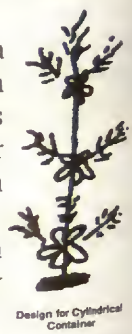
Design for Bubble or Oval Bowl

This smaller design has small branches of Nandina to form a fan-shaped line, a bright blossom for the focal point, and baby fern as filler material. There is a need for trial and error practice to get a design that fills the space properly. The edges of the design must not appear broken or cut off by the sides or top of its container. Within limits, it is possible to move the design around to get proper magnification in a bubble or oval container.

Using the cylindrical container, I created tall designs positioned very near the center line of the container as shown below.

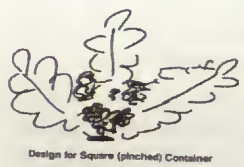
For the cylindrical container, I used a cypress branch, three small dark blossoms, and Mexican heather.

For the square (pinched) container, that is a container with concave surfaces, the design should be large enough to almost touch the sides of the container and reach almost to the water line. This type of container reduces rather than magnifies the size of this design.


Design for Cylindrical Container

For the square container, I used large fern leaves, a cluster of blossoms, and flat juniper branches.

Whatever shape or size of container used for an underwater design, the main thing is to experiment repeatedly with different plant materials. Results may be surprisingly beautiful.


Design for Square (pinched) Container

From the Dixie News,
Publication of the Dixie AVS

"And the winners are ..."

Mary J. Corondan
7205 Dillon Court
Plano, TX 75024

AV AND GESNERIAD SOCIETY OF WESTERN NY, NY – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: *Saintpaulia tongwensis, Saintpaulia grandifolia #299, Saintpaulia orbicularis purpurea*; Best in Show/Best Standard: Neptune; Best Trailer: Ellie Gardner; Best Species: *Saintpaulia orbicularis purpurea*; Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* variegated seedling; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Paul Kroll.** 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Berry Shake, Rob's Cool Fruit, Rob's Whoa Nellie, **Ralph Robinson.** Best Semiminiature: Rob's Boogie Woogie, **Michael Kotarski.** Best Design: Judy Niemira.

AVS OF SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Rhapsodie Clementine, Lyon's Northern Star, Victorian Parasol; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Optimara Little Cherokee, Rob's Sarsparilla, Sassy Sister; Best in Show/Best Standard: Rhapsodie Clementine; Best Trailer: Rob's Lilli Pilli; Best Species: *Saintpaulia pendula*; Best Gesneriad: *Chirita* hybrid; Best Design; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Madeline Taube.** Best Semiminiature: Rob's Cool Fruit, **Fred Grafelman.** Design Sweepstakes, **Mary Sue Bucher.**

CAPITOL CITY AVS, CA – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Maggie Lee, Lyon's Plum Pudding, Optimara Monet; Best in Show/Best Miniature: Orchard's Bumble Magnet; Best Standard: Optimara Monet; Best Semiminiature: Optimara Little Inca; Best Gesneriad: *Episcia* 'Silver Dust'; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Oscar Faoro.** Best Trailer: Cirelda; Design Sweepstakes, **Dianna Peterson.** Best Design, **Mae Mendes.**

COLUMBUS AVS, OH – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Floozie, Robert Mayer, Rhapsodie Maria; Best in Show/Best Standard: Ness' Blueberry Puff; Best Semiminiature: Ness' Sno Fun; Best Miniature: Petite Jewel; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Mary Martin.** Best Trailer: Champagne Pink, **Tracey Koman.** Best Gesneriad: *Chirita sinensis* 'Moonlight', **Nancy Carr.** Best Design, **Janice Beaty.** Design Sweepstakes, **Mary Everling.**

FANTASY AVC, FL – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Arapahoe, Phobos, Natchurly Nawlins; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Slap Happy, Rob's Dust Storm, Pink Playmate; Best in Show/Best Standard: Picasso; Best Semiminiature: Pink Playmate; Best Miniature: Rob's Jitterbug; Best Trailer: Blueberries 'n' Cream; Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Party Girl', **Thad Skaggs.** 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Boogie Woogie, Rob's Antique Rose, Ness' Crinkle Blue, **Fran Carson.** Best Design, **Pat Rials.**

ILLINOIS AVS, IL – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Golden Plume, East Wind, Smooch Me; 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Ness' Crinkle Blue, Classic Rock, Super Boy; Best in Show/Best Standard: Smooch Me, **Andrea Worrell.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Picasso, Vintage Wine, Red Robe, **Dixie Williams.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Whippoorwill, Rob's Boogie Woogie, Snookums; Best Miniature: Ness' Elfin Magic, **Amy Cash-Allison.** Best Semiminiature: Rob's Shadow Magic; Best Design; Design Sweepstakes, **Susan Andresen.** Best Trailer: Yesterday's Child; Best Species: *Saintpaulia grandifolia #237*, **Morgan Simmons.** Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Tie Dyed'; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Judi Du Pont.**

OSHKOSH AVS, WI – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Powwow, Kev's Heavenly Star, Kev's Freckle Face; Best in Show/Best Standard: Powwow; Best Design, **Kevin Degner.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: *Saintpaulia confusa, Saintpaulia difficilis, Saintpaulia shumensis,* **Bill Greider.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Miniwinni, Milky Way Trail, Rob's Wagga Wagga; Best Trailer: Rob's Miniwinni, **Pete Berens.** Best Semiminiature: Rob's Boogie Woogie, **Betty Schreiber.** Best Species: *Saintpaulia grandifolia* Mather #7. Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Blue Water', **Ebe Schreiber.** Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Betsy Fox.** Design Sweepstakes, **Betsy Fox and Kevin Degner (tie).**

PARMATOWN AVS, OH – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Favorite Child, Maid Marion, Picasso; Best in Show/Best Standard: Picasso, **Marian Tisdale.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Aca's Summer Parfait, Barbara Jean, Optimara Michelangelo; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Milky Way Trail, Rob's Humpty Doo, Rob's Lilli Pilli; Best Miniature/Best Species: *Saintpaulia shumensis*; Best Gesneriad: *Gloxinia purpurascens*; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Linda Neumann.** Best Semiminiature: Rob's Whippoorwill, **Martha Bell.**

SAN MATEO AVS, CA – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Victorian Parasol, The Alps, Emerald City; Best Miniature: Pink Puff, **Madeline Taube.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Satin Dancer, Rain Man, Optimara Trinidad; Best Semiminiature: Ness' Crinkle Blue; Best Trailer: Ramblin' Dots; Best Species: *Saintpaulia pendula* var. *kizarae*; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Tory Hartman.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: California Sunset, Cool Blue, Optimara Little Omaha, **Charmion Woolfe.** 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Optimara Little Moonstone, Optimara Little Sapphire, Optimara Little Diamond, **Peggy Gensel.** Best in Show/Best Standard: Winter Ice, **Lisa Fuller.** Best Gesneriad: *Chirita* 'Kazu', **Kristi Frederick.** Best Design, **Heather Morgan.** Design Sweepstakes, **Sam McKenna.**

SILVERMINE AVS, CT – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Optimara Trinidad, Rhapsodie Cora, Rodeo Showgirl; 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Rinky Dink, Rob's Cherry Soda, Honey Blue Angel; Best Standard: Optimara Trinidad; Horticulture Sweepstakes, Design Sweepstakes, **Marjorie Rosenberg.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Fuzzy Navel, Rob's Scooter, Rob's Hand Puppet; Best in Show/Best Trailer: Fancy Trail; Best Semiminiature: Rob's Fuzzy Navel; Best Miniature: Ness' Angel Babe; Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* 'Bristol's Party Girl', **Lynn Wallach.** Best Species: *Saintpaulia* House of Amani, **Sylvia Siegel.** Best Design, **Jean Simons.**

TIDEWATER AVS, VA – Winners: Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Milky Way Trail, Rob's Humpty Doo, Rob's Wagga Wagga; Best in Show/Best Standard: Optimara EverGlory; Best Semiminiature: Precious Lavender; Best Miniature: Tiny Dancer; Best Trailer: Ramblin' Lassie; Best Species: *Saintpaulia* House of Amani; Best Gesneriad: *Nematanthus* 'Tropicana'; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Pat Knight.** Best Design, **Carol Van.**

TORONTO AVS, ONTARIO – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Ma's Silk Flower; Buffalo Hunt, Optimara Figi; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Optimara Little Blackfoot, Optimara Little Hopi II, Rob's Little Pueblo, **Doris Brownlie.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Optimara EverGrace; Optimara EverPraise; Optimara Manitoba; Best in Show/Best Standard: Frosty Frolic; Best Trailer: Fantasy Waltz; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Louise McPherson.** Best Semiminiature: Morgan's Semira, **Nancy Ley.** Best Miniature: Optimara Rose Quartz, **Emma Bygott.** Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* "Bristol's Sunrise', **Olga Veitlib.** Design Sweepstakes, **Eleanor Elston.**

In Search of New Violets

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Every once in a while I run low on questions and will post a request for help with several of the on-line African violet discussion groups. Long-time African violet grower Lynn Lombard asked, "There's a discussion going on within the Violet Reflections online group about blossoms that seem to open during the day, close at night, and reopen the next day. I've seen it happen with singles over the years, but the question is: What's happening and why?"

Although this question is not directly related to hybridizing, I thought the African Violet Magazine readers might be interested in an explanation of this phenomenon.

How: The movement is likely due to turgor pressure changes in the cells at the base of the petals. The same pressure changes are what closes the traps in Venus Fly Traps and drops the leaves of sensitive plants when they are touched. The leaves of some plants change position during the day and night (e.g. prayer plants, bean plants), and turgor pressure changes in cells at the base of the leaf blade or petiole are responsible.

The movement each day is usually controlled by circadian rhythms. Circadian rhythms are regular 24 hour movements that have been linked to the production of certain proteins by the cells. The proteins allow the movement of ions in the cells which changes water concentrations. Since turgor pressure is caused by water moving in or out of the cell, the ion changes will cause water to move in (swelling the cell) or move out (making the cell flaccid). The movement of water results in turgor pressure which then moves the petals.

Why: In other plants, the opening and closing of the flowers shelters the reproductive parts from damage or ensures that the pollen is only presented when pollinators are active. The anthers of African violets are often sensitive to fungi attack. Perhaps closing the flowers at night prevents moisture from being trapped in the flower and rotting the anthers.

We don't know exactly what pollinates the wild plants in nature. The blue petals and contrasting yellow anthers suggest that the pollinator might be a small bee of some type. The opening of the flowers during the day exposes the bright yellow anthers which may help make the flowers more visible to the pollinator.

Whatever the reason, natural selection seems to have favored individuals that open and close their flowers. The trait has persisted and is still seen in plants with single petals. Double petal plants don't show the trait because there isn't enough room at the base of the overlapping petals to allow movement. Single stick-tight flowers are less likely to show petal movement because they carry the double petal trait. Watch the flowers on your single petal plants and see if you can detect the day/night movement of the flowers.

Q: *I have had trouble getting the fruits to mature after I pollinate the flowers. Any suggestions?*

A: Sometimes a fruit will not mature because not enough seeds were fertilized in the flower. The cause might be a lack of enough pollen to fertilize all the seeds. Be sure that you place a good supply of pollen on the stigma of the flower. Another hint is to pollinate under high humidity conditions. Humidity seems to help the pollen tube grow to reach the seeds and fertilize the egg. When I lived in Oklahoma, I had to pollinate on rainy days in order to have enough humidity to get good seed set.

Fruit development also depends on the presence of hormones produced after fertilization. If too few seeds develop, there won't be enough hormone produced to maintain the fruit. One suggestion to overcome this problem is to pollinate several flowers on the same bloom stalk. The hormones produced by several developing fruits will reinforce each other and allow the fruits to mature. Hopefully, one or more of these ideas will help with your problem.

Q: *Would it be difficult to get variegated foliage that has the bustle trait?*

A: No, this would not be difficult and should be produced in the first generation. The key is to use a variegated plant as the seed parent. The pollen should come from a bustle foliage plant. Variegation is usually inherited maternally so if the seed parent is variegated, the offspring should be as well. Bustle foliage is a simple genetic dominant. A pollen parent with this trait should transmit the trait to at least 50% of their offspring. You should get some nice variegated bustle plants in the first generation. Good luck with the cross.

Q: *Are there any special traits one looks for in deciding which plants to use as parents?*

A: Choosing plants as parents should reflect your goal in the offspring. If you want the offspring to show a genetic dominant trait such as girl foliage, at least one of the parents must carry this trait. If your goal is variegated foliage, the seed parent must be variegated. If you want a recessive trait such as pink flowers, avoid parents that carry dominant traits for color. Recessive traits can be hidden and still be expressed, but both parents must carry at least one copy of the trait. Unless you know the ancestry of a plant, it may be impossible to tell if they carry the recessive trait. If you are not sure and want fast results, choose parents that already express the recessive trait.

The bottom line is that you should plan ahead and choose parents with traits you'd like to combine together in the offspring. There is nothing wrong with choosing parents that "just look pretty" and crossing them together. However, if space is limited for growing out large numbers of seedlings, the better option is to decide on your goal and choose parents accordingly.

Q: *Is it possible to breed violets with scent?*

A: The wild African violet species do not appear to use scent to attract their pollinators. They use the flower petals and contrasting yellow anthers instead. Thus, there is no trait for scent production for hybridizers to work with. The only way to get scent would be to splice a gene for scent from another species into African violet DNA. I don't know if genes for scent have been located in the DNA of other species, but the DNA splicing technology is available and could be conducted in a genetics lab. Perhaps someone will take on this project and produce some scented African violets in the near future.

Miniatures

by Pauline Bartholomew

From her book, *Growing to Show*

I admire single-crown miniatures and "ooh" and "aah" over them at shows, but I do not grow them to any great extent. I keep about a half dozen so that I can be familiar with their growth habits and can judge them knowledgeably. I also like to have entries in all horticulture classes in judged shows. Some years I have entered only one or two miniatures, but still I have won quite a few Best Miniature rosettes. I can offer only a few growing tips. You will have to look to the experts on miniatures for detailed growing methods.

Except for the few months before a show, my miniatures are grown about 15" below the lights. Not for any particular reason; it just happens to be the most convenient for my setup. The foliage grows flat and well-shaped, but very few blossoms are produced. Miniatures should be repotted frequently, but I'm very lax about following this practice. Consequently, before a show I have to make some drastic moves in order to get my miniatures ready.

1. About three months before a show, I remove all but two rows of leaves and pot down the resulting neck. Sometimes there are only a few roots left at the base of the stem. The plants are so grateful for this new lease on life that they put out beautiful new growth which then dwarfs the existing rows of leaves.
2. About six weeks before the show, I remove the one or two off-sized rows of leaves and wrap the neck in wet sphagnum moss. At this point, the symmetry is just right, and it is too difficult to get new soil under and around the neck and the turgid foliage without damaging the leaves. New roots grow into the sphagnum moss, and the plant is just as happy as if it were in soil mix. If necessary, I also do this the week before a show.
3. During final potting, all blossoms are removed, and the plants are raised to within 8" from the lights. With a little luck, they are a mass of bloom at show time.

Vintage Violets

Barbara Elkin
Vintage Violets Committee
2855 Gayle Lane
Auburn, CA 95602-9674
email: bjabar@earthlink.net

There are two people on a mission to collect Vintage Violets. Rich is looking for all of the Rob's past introductions, and Margaret wants all the Granger or Eyerdom plants. Please read the AVSA Most Wanted Column closely.

An uneventful summer has passed with the exception of my broken right elbow. Of course, this put an end to my yearly fishing trip. This also means everything is now left handed!

AVSA Most Wanted

Adena
Allen Anthony
Andrea
Angelic Lace
Artist Dream
Atlantic City
Avalon
Bella Gitana
Beverly Sills
Blue Chips
Cameo Pink
Cristabel
Candy Stripe
Coca Cola
Cotton Bowl
Faith
Granger's Calais
Granger's Charl
Granger's Colleen
Granger's Normandy
Granger's Startler
Granger's Twilight Halo
Fall River Plum
Frivolous Class
Genetic Dwarf
Julie Ann
Katy
Lady Corrine
Optimara Arkansas
Peppermint Fling
Picturesque
Pink Bottonaire
Pink Viceroy
Rainbow's Fuji Gold
Rob's Blue Kazoo
Rob's Crazy Quit
Rose Bandmaster
Rose Triumph
Sanae
Scarlet Macaw
Seafoam
Sierra Skies
Sugar Plum Fairy
Superman
Titan Blue
Viola Tucker
Violet Dawson
Wanderlust
Wheel of Fortune
White Crusader
Yarrow Briar Rose

AFFILIATE UPDATE

Bev Promersberger
Affiliate Committee
7992 Otis Way, Pensacola, FL 32506
email: Promers22@hotmail.com

Congratulations and welcome to new clubs in Massachusetts and Texas:

Bay State African Violet Judges Council
President: Suzanne Ress
145 Main Street #1
Malden, MA 02148-6939
E-mail: suzanne.ress@nextiraone.com

Fun Time African Violet Society of Texarkana
President: Cynthia Weitzel
311 Brown Drive
Texarkana, TX 75501-0219

Registration Report

Janice Bruns
1220 Stratford Lane
Hanover Park, IL 60133
email: janice@qwip.net

A name reservation costs $1.00 and is valid for two years, after which time it may be extended two years for an additional $1.00. Registration of the plant is $5.00 unless completed within the reservation period, in which case the balance is then $4.00. Please make check payable to AVSA.

*****

Ruth Bann – Fridley, MN

***Rebel's Blue Lake** (9350) 6/7/04 (R. Bann) Single-semi-double medium blue pansy. **Variegated** dark green and cream, pointed, glossy, serrated. **Standard**

***Rebel's Likewise** (9351) 6/7/04 (R. Bann) Single-semi-double pink two-tone pansy/white edge. **Variegated** dark green and ivory, pointed, glossy/red back. **Standard**

***Rebel's Minnesota Haze** (9352) 6/7/04 (R. Bann) Single medium blue large star/frilled white edge. **Variegated** dark green and cream, pointed /red back. **Large**

***Rebel's Rosita** (9353) 6/7/04 (R. Bann) Double wine-red large ruffled star. **Variegated** dark green and beige, plain, serrated/red back. **Large**

***Rebel's Ruby Kisses** (9354) 6/7/04 (R. Bann) Semidouble magenta large ruffled star. **Variegated** dark green and beige, plain, quilted, glossy/red back. **Standard**

*****

Stanley Ko – Shatin NT Hong Kong

***Ko's Eva Delight** (9355) 6/14/04 (S. Ko) Semidouble chimera white pansy/fuchsia-red stripe. Medium green, quilted. **Semiminiature**

***Ko's Maria Chow** (9356) 6/14/04 (S. Ko) Single chimera blue star/white and variable yellow stripe. Light green, quilted. **Standard**

*****

Sharon Corton – Framingham, MA

***Mama-Loves Echo** (9357) 7/30/04 (S. Corton) Semidouble-double purple. **Variegated** dark green, pink and cream, quilted. **Semiminiature**

***Mama-Loves Tinker** (9358) 7/30/04 (S. Corton) Single-semidouble white frilled star/pink blush, variable green edge. **Variegated** medium green and cream, plain, pointed. **Semiminiature**

NAME RESERVATIONS

Dolores Harrington – Fridley, MN

* Chiffon Clouds * Country Melody * Dainty Lass * Dolores' Blue Blazes * Dolores' Snow Princess * Haley Jordan * Orchid Lullaby * Princess Bride * Purple Parasol *

REGISTRATION CHANGE

The following blossom description has been changed at the request of the Shows and Judges Committee, and approved by the hybridizer:

Picasso (6924) Double light blue **and white/variable** white fantasy. (Changes in bold.)

Haloing

by Sue Haffner

Yellow "halos" can form on the margins of older leaves in the outer rows on African violets. This happens because nitrogen is what is referred to as a mobile nutrient. If the plant in question cannot obtain enough nitrogen from the soil, nitrogen will be taken from older growth to supply the growing point. In this case, the growing point outranks the mature foliage. (Botanists refer to this as "apical dominance".) The yellow occurs from the migration of the nitrogen out of the leaf and, sadly, it cannot be replaced. The soilless mixes that many of us use for our violets do not necessarily have the nutrient-holding capacity for large plants, and this needs to be compensated for.

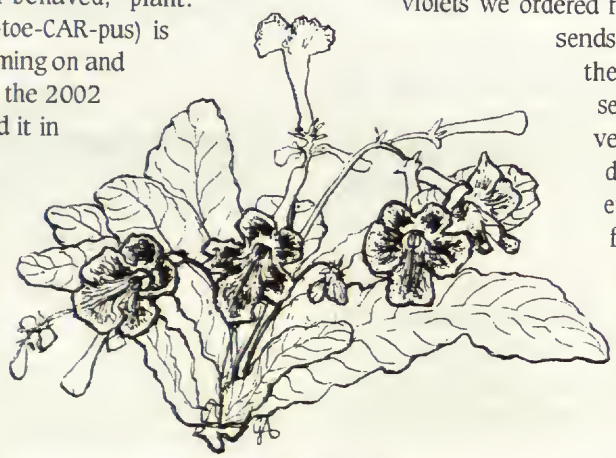
Some growers like to use fish emulsion for their violets. A dose every couple of weeks encourages beautiful foliage and, used in combination with regular inorganic feedings, can prevent nutrient leaching from the outer leaves.

From the *CA Council News*

A Family Portrait

Georgene Albrecht
101 Oak Heights Drive
Oakdale, PA 15071
email: georgena@verizon.net

This is one beautiful, well-behaved, plant. *Streptocarpus* 'Calico print' (strep-toe-CAR-pus) is a small grower that just keeps blooming on and on. David Thompson sold these at the 2002 AV convention, and I have enjoyed it in bloom almost every day since. The flowers are hard to describe but are so outstanding. They have a purple netting on each petal, but the throat and edge of each petal stay very white. They last a long time. It is registered in the Gesneriad Register as 2002, IRO2814, a hybrid of *S.* 'Serius' X *S.* 'Janus'. Each stem gets from two to four flowers, and there are four to five stems per leaf.



Streptocarpus 'Calico Print'

It never needs a pot larger than three-inches. Repotting every four to five months will keep the plant blooming all the time. Any light Cornell potting soil mix is perfect. Fertilize with a constant low-strength water soluable formula. Don't let *Streptocarpus* dry out because most of the root system is on the very top inch of the soil ball. This also means that you must not fertilizer the dry root system.

BINGO

Yesterday we had our annual pot-luck style picnic in a park pavilion. We also had a game of bingo that our President found in the dollar store. It was great. People pitched in what they wanted, and we had great prizes like counted cross stitch, miniature violets, linen spray, body lotions, tree ornament, tee shirts, and a tray of lovely variegated standard violets we ordered from Travis' Violets in Georgia. He sends great, husky plants, and some of them were varieties that I have never seen. All were in bloom and shipped very nicely. He always has a great deal if you let him pick the varieties. This bingo game was such fun; we just went on and on calling numbers until all the prizes were gone. Perhaps other clubs could do this for holiday parties or even fund-raisers. Everyone that wanted to play could purchase a bingo card for a minimum amount. Some won a lot, and some won nothing, so, being the kindly lot we are, we were giving our winnings to those who had not won. Some people had fun trading the winnings. All in all, it was one of the nicest picnics we have ever had. The day was splendid.

THRIPS

A dear lady has e-mailed me asking how I control thrips. Well, I don't know what to say because just when I think I have won the battle, there they are again. The first step is prevention. From April until the October freeze, never work outside and then go to your indoor plants. They come in with you. Second, cover all the plants you possibly can. I think this is the most important factor.

When I see spilled pollen or tissue damage, I remove all the flowers and most buds. Thrips need to eat pollen, which is a high protein. So, isolate any plant that you see even one

thrips. Where there is one, there is a whole colony. They are attracted to the color yellow so you can make a sticky trap by coating some yellow plastic with petroleum jelly or tangle foot jell.

Your best defense is to use a barrier. Wrap plants in Saran Wrap. Place all small plants in a standard nursery tray and cover with the clear dome. This is the best answer. If I see thrips, the plants is moved to another tray that has a Hot Shot vapona strip in the bottom. If you have your entire collection infested, order enough vapona strips to hang in the light garden under plastic drop cloths. I get mine at Lowes, Home Depot, or feed stores like Agway.

These vapors do kill the thrips when they are strong and enclosed. Watch that you do not turn foliage to mush with new vapona strips. New ones need flowing air movement. I know that there are several good chemical sprays that our advertisers in AVM may sell, but I will not try to spray anything in my home. I keep telling myself that I am doing just fine because there are millions of them living in the hay field beside my house. I will not risk exposing myself, my pets, and family to the sprays because the critters will just be back again.

If I am going to grow for show, there is always a slice of the vapona strip placed in the bottom of the tray as a preventative. These do run out of steam and must be replaced often.

A GOLDEN JUBILEE

by Jeanne Maier

Fifty years of wonderful growing for the Long Island African Violet Society began in 1954 with a charter drawn up and an apropos Show theme of "Oceans of Violets". What the first inspired group thought was going to be a humble beginning of a club formed from AVSA members on Long Island, turned out to be an outpouring of people that forced the restriction of membership to one hundred, with a waiting list.

Today we have dwindled to thirty – but thirty interested and active members. Our one Charter member, still with us, Frances Bermann, tells her story of growing leaves on her pillow under the light which was over the bed. It didn't take very long after that for her husband to build a plant stand!

Long Island African Violet Society

Ingenuity, persistence, and loyalty set African violet lovers apart, and today this spirit crosses oceans and continents to form friendships and to continue research. We here on Long Island salute our Queens of the past fifty years and cheer AVSA for being there so we could get started.

Left to Right: Diane Lohan - second best, Granger's Wonderland, Mickey Schnaufer - Best in Show, Red Lion Jeanne Maier - third best, Rob's Pewter Bells.

For Beginners

Sharon Holtzman
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Newtown, OH 45244
email: MsViolet@att.net

"Oh, I Have That Purple One"

Most African violet hobbyists start with the violets that they purchase from their local nurseries or grocery stores. Often times the choice is between a purple, a pink, or an occasional bi-color, and seldom do any of these have a name. These are the violets that I grew for probably 20 years, and for a large part of that time, I didn't have much confidence in being able to keep them alive long enough to need to worry about a name.

I found many other people just like myself as I began speaking to local garden clubs and senior groups.

At one particular program that I was giving to a garden club, all of the plants that I had taken along to sell were my own hybrids that hadn't been shown to anyone else prior to that program, and one of them happened to have a purple bloom on dark green foliage.

After my program, the ladies gathered around my group of plants asking questions about the colors, types of foliage, etc. As I was holding this particular "purple" one in my hand discussing the growth habits of the plant to one of the ladies, another walked up and said with much authority, "Oh, I already have **that** one" and walked off. The lady made her exit before I could tell her that there are hundreds of different purple African violets to be had, or that some day the **name** of that purple violet might be very important to her.

Know What You Grow

It wasn't long after I purchased my first couple of "named" African violets that I joined a local African Violet Society. One of the best bits of advice I had ever been given in relation to this hobby was to keep records of what I was growing.

We all seem to be using computers for everything today, and you can find programs to do just about anything in the way of record keeping, but I have another suggestion for the beginners and this is the suggestion that was made to me by a fellow club member.

Using plain old index cards are perfect, from a few held together with a paper clip to hundreds in their own file box. One of the biggest advantages of using the index cards is the ease with which they can be carried from plant to plant when you want to make notes. This isn't practical even with the lightest, thinnest laptop.

I kept a small plastic box for my cards with the following sections:

Standards	Trailers
Semi Miniatures	Discontinued or Lost Plants
Miniatures	My Wish List

In each of these sections, the plants were kept in alphabetical order. This was filing in its simplest form, but a grower could expand this method by breaking the sections down even further by having a section for Standards with Green Foliage, and Standards with Variegated Foliage, etc. Heck, you could really knock yourself out and break each of these sections down further by bloom color and type !!

On the front of each of your index cards, you will want to list:

The name of the African violet.

Where the plant was purchased or who you received it from.

The description of the plant.

The AVSA registration number (this will be very important if you ever decide to enter this plant in a "collection" in an AVSA Judged Show because you will need to know this number).

On the back of the card, you might want to keep a record of the dates that you propagated this plant with notes on how the propagation went. Did the leaf propagate quickly? Did the leaf produce few or many babies? Is this plant easy to grow or does it require special care? If this is a plant that you are growing for competition, you might want to make a note on how long it takes to come into bloom after a total disbudding. After you have acquired several African violets and have grown them for while, you will decide which notes are important to you.

You may not want to take your entire box of cards with you if you happen to attend an African violet show or sale, but you could always take the cards that are in your "Wish List" in hopes of finding them to add to your collection. It's like going on your own personal treasure hunt for those lovely violets that you just have to have.

Assuming that all of you beginners who are now reading this article will soon become driven African violet enthusiasts, somewhere down the road your section which includes the "Discontinued or Lost Violets" will become very important.

Many times it has happened to me that a few years after I am no longer growing a particular violet, I will see it included on the list from one of our commercials and be tempted to buy it again. I have saved myself a lot of frustration, in addition to money, by checking my cards in the "Discontinued" file and being reminded of why I was no longer growing that plant - it didn't do well in my conditions, never gave me more than one or two babies, didn't grow well without a leaf support, blooms faded too soon, etc. I'm hard pressed to find the space in my plant room for the violets that do well so I certainly do not need to give this valuable space to those that require so much special care.

Last but not least is the pure enjoyment of looking through that file box after your collection has grown considerably. It is like reuniting with old friends, and you might just get a giggle or two when you read the comments you made at the very beginning of this venture in comparison to the notes that you made once you had become that "driven hobbyist" !!

I won't embarrass myself by sharing my own comparison of comments. Just trust that any comments you do make for yourself will be helpful or entertaining at some point during your growing experiences.

I hope that all of your African violet growing experiences are joyful ones!!

My Favorite Winter Gesneriad

by Ima Beaver

Oh, what joy it is to go to my plant room during winter's dreary months to see the Smithiantha with their stunning flowers combined with their gorgeous, velvety foliage. Most grow multi-crowned from one rhizome.

SMITHIANTHA

S. **multiflora** has lovely white blossoms, but I dislike its open, spindly growth. By mid-January it's over two feet tall, and I've had to support its stalks with stakes. Its foliage is velvety bright green.

S. **zebrina** with its velvety wine foliage grows so tall quickly; perhaps I didn't have it within three inches of the light tubes when it broke dormancy. When it was four inches tall with three pair of leaves, I cut the two crowns to ground level and started these in fresh soil, covering with plastic for a couple of weeks, of course. The 'mother' rhizome still looks plump and green. I wonder if it will produce again? I'll try. The stumps of the young plants that I cut off already had small rhizomes on them, two on one, four on the other. I wonder if they'll grow? I'll try. This is the fun of growing gesneriads; I'm learning by hit or miss. *S.* zebrina is supposed to have red flowers with yellow markings. I can't wait to see the blooms.

S. **aurantiaca** from one rhizome has six spikes. Wow! It has orange flowers over dark red-green velvety foliage, for want of a better description. It is now in full bloom, ten inches from bottom of pot to the top of the spike, and it will probably grow a bit more. I've had to remove it from the light stand. It's happy on the floor in front of the stand. They don't seem to require as much light after they form spikes.

S. **'Little One'** is one I've had for several years. I've described the others I have, but saved the best for last 'Little One', with its scarlet and yellow flowers with yellow lobes, red-spotted throat over velvety dark green leaves mottled purple and brown, remains compact enough to stay under lights. It's my all-time favorite winter-blooming gesneriad... except maybe *Eucodonia* 'Frances' or *Gloxinia* 'Medea'.

Leaf cuttings will produce rhizomes, I'm told, but I never bother. The leaves are so large that I don't have room for them; also, one plant makes so many fat, juicy, green rhizomes, that's enough for myself and sharing with others. *Smithiantha* flowers are terminal so as soon as it's budded, there is no point in removing tops for extra plants.

I start rhizomes in four-inch pots, but as soon as they're well started, I put them in five or six-inch azalea pots. Soon, I start feeding them 20-20-20 switching to 15-30-15 or so once flower spikes start to show. They usually bloom for two months or more for me. Then when the top finishes blooming, I cut off the blossom spikes, set the plants aside, and keep watering for several more weeks. Then I harvest the rhizomes, let them dry a while (a day or so), and put them in baggies with vermiculite.

If you have room, you could put them horizontally over a bed of soil, one per pot for they grow quite large. Barely cover them with more soil and spray with some water occasionally to prevent them from drying out. You could try breaking one rhizome into small pieces if you wish. Each piece will produce a plant, albeit small at first. Enjoy.

Reprinted from Newsviews,
the AGGS Newsletter Editor's Newsletter

Raising Violets for Fun-ds

by Joyce Stenger

Our local violet club raises money to fund its club activities and to support state, regional, and national events. Sometimes, we hold silent auctions in the lobby of our aerospace company where most of us (or our spouses) are employed. This is how we put on a silent auction.

HOLD AN AUCTION

Club members vote to have a fund raising event during a regularly scheduled club meeting at least three months prior to holding the auction. The president appoints an auction chairman to coordinate events.

ACQUIRE COMPANY APPROVAL

Permission from the appropriate company manager to hold the silent auction is obtained. A date and location are agreed upon that is least disruptive for employees. Our agreement is to hold two events: one the week before Mother's Day in May and another one two weeks before Christmas in December. There are company restrictions we follow such as not using government furnished email or company materials for our activities.

ORDER OR DONATE PLANTS

Ideally, each club member donates one show plant for the auction, then none would need to be purchased. When that is not possible, such as with our club which is very new, money is allocated to purchase exhibit-size plants from a local commercial grower and the plants are ordered. The greater the quantity of plants leads to lower bids. So we limit our auctions to about a dozen large plants that are enhanced with holiday decorations.

ENHANCE THE VIOLETS

For the Mother's Day sale, we put the plants in donated baskets that have been recently painted in pastel colors. We add a huge color-coordinated bow and whatever else seems appropriate such as "Happy Mother's Day" inserts. For Christmas, we put the plants in colorful foil wraps and add a large bow. Sometimes we add holiday decorations such as gold balls or silver bells. Either way, the plants become enhanced as centerpieces and not just African violets.

POST ANNOUNCEMENTS

Throughout the building, club members post announcements that the silent auction is coming! SH-SH-SH-SH is added to minimize noise and distraction. Anyone that has previously purchased a plant or had interest in violets or gesneriads gets a personal copy of the announcement flyer in their mailbox "IN" basket. Employees are not disturbed during their working time.

RESERVE AREAS

One part of the lunch or conference room is reserved for setting up the auction, decorating the plants, and preparing the bid sheets. Because we can be "bumped out" of our reservation for different reasons, always reserve a backup area, then cancel it when unused. Club members should be scheduled to attend during their lunch so they can be available to help with the setup.

DECORATE AND SETUP

The plants can be delivered or picked up by a club member. When plants arrive, club members show up, usually during their lunch hour, to help prepare plants for auction. The plants should be groomed, decorated, and evaluated for minimum bid. Three tables are set up in the lobby. Baskets or centerpieces are placed neatly and carefully on the tables with their individual bid sheets TAPED DOWN next to each item. Pens (no pencils) should be left at each table. Members then disappear to post flyers indicating the bidding has started.

SECURITY

Our lobby has a security guard during working hours. The guards have no responsibility towards the club fund-raising event, however, their presence (so far) has prevented any mishap from occurring to our auction items. Off hour employees can get to the plants; however, so far, their activity is only curiosity.

THE AUCTION BEGINS

Each bid sheet has instructions and at least twelve places to bid with a line for a telephone number of each bidder. The minimum bid placed on each bid sheet allows for cost plus profit for the club. If there is only one bid on each plant, a profit is thereby guaranteed. Club members may get in the mood and do some initial bidding to get things started. Bidding can continue for two or three days. Be sure to post when bidding stops so bidders have a chance to up it once more before the end. Let the bidding just happen.

THE AUCTION ENDS

At the end of the posted time period, all the winning bidders are notified that their bid was the best. They are requested to come to pick up their centerpieces or baskets. We provide a carrying box for their decorated item which usually is the box the plant was brought in with. We provide an AVSA brochure on care for the plant. Checks are accepted because we know the bidders. Those plants not picked up can be held until the next day, then the next highest bidder is informed and that becomes the winning bid. Club members clean up around the auction site including removing all flyers and postings.

AUCTION FUN-DS

Winning bidders are fun to be around. They get so excited! The club treasurer is delighted to be fun-ded for the next six months. The company is pleased to allow employee activities that do not disturb employees while working. Everyone wins at a silent auction.

From the Dixie News, Publication of the Dixie AVS

The Southern Side of Cincinnati

by Penny Wichman

"Is Cincinnati really in Kentucky?" That's a question that will be coming to mind as you get your 2005 AVSA Convention Registration Form. Even though the Ohio River divides the area, the Greater Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky region has been working together to promote the best of both.

The Drawbridge Inn and Convention Center is one of the most "convention friendly" complexes in the country, at extremely reasonable rates. Their location can't be beat. They are right off of I-75 – the main north-south interstate in this part of the country, just five miles south of downtown Cincinnati. There is plenty of free parking. The Greater Cincinnati International Airport, a main Delta hub, is also only seven miles away, and they provide free transportation with their "Coach to the Castle."

The rooms are not overly large, but they are comfortable and well decorated. Each room has a coffee maker, iron, ironing board, and hair dryer as well as free cable TV. High speed internet access is available for a small charge. The medieval theme runs throughout the complex. The outdoor pool will not be open yet, but there is a fantastic glass enclosed indoor complex complete with heated pool, sauna, whirlpool, and even palm trees. An exercise room is also available, free to guests.

There will be no shortage of places to eat. There is 24 hour restaurant service right in the hotel, with Josh's open for lunch and dinner and Chaucer's Coffee Shop open late at night and for breakfast. The Gatehouse Tavern, complete with a moat, is located right next to the hotel and is open daily for dinner. It features servers in period costume and décor that will make you feel like you just went back in time to the Renaissance Era. The Crossbow tavern is open nightly Thursday through Saturday. Just a short walk away is the Montgomery Inn, made famous by comedian Bob Hope. They are world renown for their barbecue sauce. You cannot leave without trying their scrumptious ribs. They are open for lunch and dinner. Also, just a short walk away is Graeter's Ice Cream. This is a Cincinnati delicacy that you just have to try.

Also, across the street is a little Mexican restaurant owned by former Cincinnati Bengal Max Montoya, as well as the Oriental Wok for those who might prefer Chinese. And within a mile, there is every kind of fast food imaginable. Also, Skyline Chili and Goldstar Chili are nearby for those who want to try "Cincinnati chili." Your trip would not be complete without it.

As far as the actual show, we are expecting one of the biggest and best in recent years. We have over 9400 square feet of showroom and 3700 square feet for the sales area. Also, we are expecting a huge number of commercial growers, since this convention is centrally located. And for those commercial growers who are planning on attending – there is access to the sales area directly from the parking lot in the front, as well as a loading dock in the rear. There are no steps and no long hallways.

There is ample space for all of our dinner and luncheon functions, as well as meeting space galore for our presentations. Located right outside of the show and sales room will be the AVSA registration table and the information table. Our information committee is working hard to make sure they will have menus, maps, and information on local attractions. They are also planning a few special surprises, so be sure and check them out each day.

For those who are entering the show, we will have two rooms set up for a grooming area for you to unpack your plants and get them ready for the show. These rooms are accessible from the outside, where you can park your vehicle and unload your plants right into the grooming room. This will be very easy, so plan on bringing lots and lots of plants.

So the answer is yes, the 2005 AVSA Cincinnati Convention – "Violets Reign in the Queen City" is really in Kentucky. See y'all there!

1-800-770-AVSA

Training and Grooming African Violets

by Kerry Knight

Your African violets can be trained and groomed to be show plants, by following a few simple rules. It is much easier on the grower and, most of all, the plant, to carry out a few adjustments to the plant, over the year, than to have to correct a plant that has either been neglected or overlooked.

Grooming:

- Remove all baby leaves - they are generally lighter in color and smaller in size. In a Show, you will lose 1 point per baby leaf.
- Remove any yellowing or badly damaged leaves, including the petiole stubs - these also lose points when showing.
- Remove any leaves which spoil the symmetry of the plant. If you keep your plant symmetrical from day one, it will generally tend to grow that way. Form and symmetry counts for 30 points in show judging.
- Remove any dead or dying flowers and flower stalks; be sure not to leave any flower stubs.
- Remove any side shoots - these throw the plant out of shape and will lose up to 10 points in a show.
- Check to see if your plant has a neck and if so, repot. Up to 10 points can be lost for a neck.
- Remove any dirt or dust from your plant, by either brushing with a soft brush or washing with lukewarm water, being careful to tilt the plant and taking care not to saturate the potting mix. Make sure you dry any remaining water left on the leaves with tissue.
- Lastly, make sure your pot is clean and clearly labeled.

Training:

If your plant has leaves that are not growing in a symmetrical pattern, you can assist your plant by using training aides, such as clothes pegs or stakes; anything you can find to gently persuade the leaf to gradually move into a better position. Remember to do this gradually; if not, the leaf will snap.

If your leaves are tending to sag, try using a collar to support them. This can be as easy as using a plastic coated paper plate cut in half, and part of the centre removed to fit around the plant. Insert the two pieces of the plate under the outer leaves of the plant and rest them on the pot so they support the leaves and prevent the petioles being damaged by the rim of the pot. You may like to go to the trouble of purchasing polystyrene and cutting out templates to fit your pot size.

You can train your plants to flower better by disbudding them several months before the show (follow the show schedule). By disbudding, your plant has a better opportunity to have a good symmetrical rosette of leaves. I prefer to remove the complete flower stalk; some remove all but a stub. This is done because some African violets produce two bloom stalks from each axil. If you do this, you must then remove all stubs before the show; otherwise, you will lose points. Remember to get into the habit of lifting flowers that are hidden by leaves. Judges don't count flowers that are not seen.

From the *Newsletter* of the Early Morn AV Group, Australia

AVSA Booster Fund

Shirley Berger • 4343 Schumacher Rd-196E • Sebring, FL 33872

CONTRIBUTIONS: June 1, 2004 – July 31, 2004

Allen Foust, Orange, NJ. $10.00
Elizabeth Kuen, East Haven, CT 35.00
Rosemary B. Miller, Jasonville, IN 5.00
Frances C. Forbes, Stockbridge, GA 5.00
Geneva Mayo, Pulaski, TN 5.00
Barbara and Charles Werness, Coon Rapids, MN 15.00
Elizabeth Dotson, Kissimmee, FL. 5.00
Danville AVS, Danville, VA 5.00
Mary Aranda, Mexico, Mexico 5.00
Annelie Lindstrom, Hedemora, Sweden 7.00
First AVS of Spartenburg, Spartenburg, SC 15.00
Long Island AVS, Long Island, NY. 20.00
AV Club of Burlington County, Willingboro, NJ 5.00
In lieu of judge's fee for Lee Bory
Mid-Polk AVS, WinterHaven, FL 10.00
In memory of Bobby Mucci, sister of member Noma Lovell
Union County Chapter AVS, Pennington, NJ. 15.00
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THE CULTURE OF THE FLORISTS' GLOXINIA (SINNINGIA)

by Nancy Robitaille

How many times have you seen a florist's gloxinia *(Sinningia)* in a show? Rarely, probably. They are large, impressive plants with spectacular blooms that will take your breath away, yet few people who collect African violets grow these plants.

THEIR BEGINNINGS:

The discovery of the *Gloxinia* was recorded in 1785 and named in honor of P.B. Gloxin from Strassburg, Germany. Probably due to its size, the plant has not appreciated immense popularity either at that time or in our own. This plant was introduced into England and was named *Gloxinia speciosa*.

By 1825, botanists discovered that this plant had been misnamed. It was not a *Gloxinia* but actually a gesneriad that belonged to the genus *Sinningia*. In spite of this, the plant is still popularly called "Gloxinia" or "Florists' Gloxinia."

Originally, the plant was discovered in Brazil, and the first was called *G. perennis*, later called *Gloxinia speciosa*. The species plant did not greatly resemble the hybrids we see today in florists' shops or nursery shelves. The species plant has flowers which are slipper-shaped and nod or face the leaves. Todays larger varieties look up so you can see down into their throats.

CULTURE OF GLOXINIAS:

You may start your *Gloxinia* collection by purchasing a tuber or the entire plant.Tubers of most hybrids are dark brown, rounded on one side, and concave on the other.

January or February are good months to start tubers. February plantings of a tuber will assure you of a large head of bloom by late May or early June. Planning for shows is not easy. Tubers may be started at any time, however.

For show plants, only one of the plantlets that develop should be allowed to continue to grow. Other growths may be taken off and planted. Plants should be placed in the center of the florescent bulb so that symmetry can be at its best.

SOIL FOR GLOXINIAS:

Soil mix was recommended in my research, but I will not repeat these recipes since they are outdated. Growers of today use the same soil less mix that we use for African violets.

A medium sized tuber should be potted in a four or a five inch pot. If the tuber is really large, try a six or even a seven inch pot.

Fill the pot with soil until it is three-quarters full. Press the tuber into this and twist slightly. Add more soil until the tuber is covered by three-quarters. Set the pot in warm water and allow the soil to moisten.

Tubers can be started at any time but grow more slowly in winter.

LIGHT:

Gloxinias need lots of light in order to become symmetrical. Turn pots frequently. Plants grown in light gardens do very little resting. When the bloom period is over, they may be cut back to the lowest two leaves and kept in active growth. New leaves will appear in a few days, and the plant is on its way to performing again.

Flowers will stay crisp and attractive for about ten days to two weeks. They may last longer if a slightly shadier spot is found when flowering starts. A well-developed plant will have four to seven blossoms through most of a three months' season. Slipper-type flowers are more free flowering and may have twelve to fifteen or more blossoms open at the same time.

TEMPERATURE AND VENTILATION:

Gloxinias are tropical flowers from steamy jungles of Brazil so they will enjoy lots of humidity. Temperatures should range from 72 to 78 degrees F. with cooler temperatures of five to ten degrees at night.

WATERING:

Watering your plants properly insures success more than any other single factor. Tubers have a large accumulation of moisture, and this allows for less watering than for African violets. Water from the top or from the bottom but try not to water directly on top of the tuber. Use warm water. Water less during the winter months.

Warm water will not harm leaves. In fact, some growers take their plants to the kitchen sink every week or so for a shower with warm water. Keep wet plants away from direct sunlight.

SUMMERING GLOXINIAS:

You may safely summer your gloxinias outdoors. The pots may be plunged into the ground under a bushy shrub or other overhanging plant growth. When the plants bloom, bring them indoors to enjoy. Be very careful about insects from outdoors including those that might crawl into the bottom holes or flying insects.

When an older plant seems limp and leaves turn brown cut

off all the green growth and keep soil on the dry side. Growth will resume within about a month's time.

FERTILIZER:

This issue is has been debatable since, as with tulip bulbs, amaryllis, and similar tuber or bulb plants, the fertilizer is in the bulb or tuber. Some growers use small amounts of fertilizers each two weeks. Others use no extra fertilizers. Note that the growers who use no fertilizer do use products in their soil mix such as bone meal. Today's growers use the same fertilizers and amounts as with their African violets. Fertilizers such as 20-20-20 or 15-30-15 are recommended, 1/4 teaspoon to a gallon water used at each watering is now recommended.

PROPAGATION:

Healthy tubers may be used for propagation. Smaller leaves put into a glass of water or amount of soil soon produce small tubers.

The large tuber can also increase your collection by splitting it and planting sections.

Gloxinias may be compared to potatoes which are often dotted with "eyes". Each eye may be severed with part of the tuber attached. This "eye" is capable of producing a new plant.

If you are uncertain about the "eyes" of a tuber, wait until they start sprouting. This green growth may be dissected from the tuber so each section contains a sprout. Each may be dusted with sulfur or Fermate and potted up. Tubers may be stored in the pots they have been growing in.

When a resting tuber begins to sprout, take out about an inch of the soil on top and replace with fresh soil. When the pot seems crowded, take out the tuber and place it into a larger pot. Some tubers take up to three months to rest while others do not rest at all. Resting tubers may also be stored in a bag or container. They do need a bit of air to keep them from molding.

Leaves may be torn from the plant, then rooted in water or soil. Smaller, younger leaves perform better than older leaves. Roots appear in about ten days. As the end of the stem begins to broaden, it is time to plant the leaf if you have placed it in water. From six weeks to two months, "mouse ears" may be seen.

Leaves can also be used in propagation like those of Rex begonia. This procedure is to sever the veins of a leaf, place the leaf face up on soil less medium, and cover the end of the stem with soil. The leaf should be weighted down with pebbles. Provide humidity with a plastic sack. Provide some ventilation.

The leaf stem may also be split in two then planted in soil or water.

Gloxinias may be propagated with seeds.

PESTS AND DISEASES:

Gloxinias are less susceptible to pests than many other plants. However, they may still be affected by most pest in the African violet army. Aphids, cyclamen mite, mealy bugs, springtails, static buds, and thrips may be found when growing these plants.

Gloxinias may be affected with bud blast, chlorosis, flower malformation, leaf curl, tuber rot, and wilt.

GLOXINIA HYBRIDS:

Buell nurseries seems to have hybridized most of the named *Gloxinia* hybrids. Since their greenhouses are no longer open to the public, the grower must search in local greenhouses for unnamed varieties. The hybridizers of this beautiful plant have not recorded much information about their hybrids. Many have not even been formally named. Following are some named hybrids you may be able to find.

EMPEROR FREDERICK – Heavy scarlet with pearly margins.

EMPEROR WILLIAM – Deep pansy-purple with heavy white margin.

ETOILE DE FEU (STAR OF FIRE) – Sparkling cardinal-red flowers.

GLOXINIA CRASSIFOLIA – m. Rossiad, hybridizer 1870. Plants have rounded, velvety, thick leaves with plump short buds, large solid flowers, very wide at the mouth but with a narrow tube. Colors range through the blues and shade into rose.

MONT BLANC – Bright, snowy white, with little or no ruffling.

MONTERAY ROSE – deep glowing pink.

PANZER BEAUTY – Solid red flowers with wavy margins. This is an excellent bloomer and the parent of many new hybrids.

QUEEN WILHELIMINA – A lovely and unusual combination of dainty pink with an iridescent violet sheen.

SWITZERLAND – Shining scarlet-cerise with a white ruffled edge, throat well flared.

WATERLOO – an international favorite, flowers are bright scarlet with margins deeply ruffled.

BLUE CHIPS – deep blue double flowers on a compact plant.

JACK O' DIAMONDS – double scarlet with white edging

QUEEN OF HEARTS – large double rose-pink

SINCERELY – a named hybrid by Peggie Schulz, rose-red slipper with white edge.

WHITE KNIGHT – pure white.

The Albert Buell hybrids include an entire strain of extra large gloxinias, most with ruffled petals. The color range is wide including soft pinks, honey-blends, frosty orchids. near-blues and heavy whites.

The true *Gloxinia* is *Gloxinia perennis* which is grown from a knotty rootstock and is similar in construction to *Achimines*. This has bell-shaped flowers.

It is unlikely that you have ever seen a *Gloxinia (Sinningia)* in a club show. Maybe yours should be the first!

Make a Blueprint for Better Hybrids

by John Beaulieu

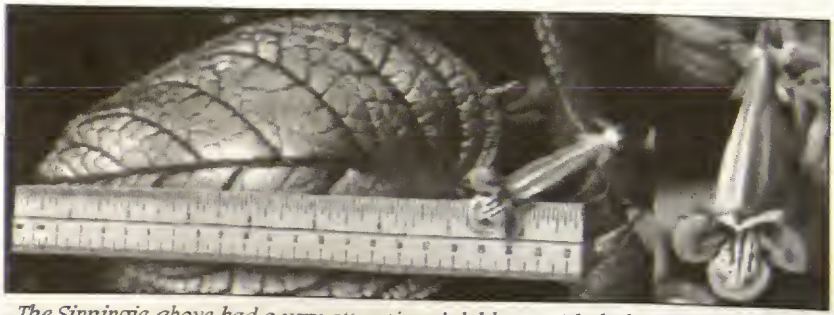
Hybridizing is a very interesting part of growing African violets and other gesneriads. There are two ways to go about hybridizing. If you just want to have some fun pollinating a few plants and growing some of the hybrids yourself or sharing with a few hobbyist friends, then you don't really need much of a plan – just have fun. If you have a goal in mind and want to create a specific cross or a definite improvement to something you already have, then you will need a plan.

In the first case, if you are simply creating seed pods for the fun of growing from seed, you will not want to officially name and/or register your seedlings. The majority will probably be similar to existing varieties, and there are already many look-a-likes out there, whether we are talking about African violets, *Episcia*, or *Streptocarpus*. However, there is nothing wrong with giving them a name for your own purposes of identification. The name could be as simple as 'Seedling Number Three' or 'Brenda's Bright Blue'. Even your own hybrids can be hard to identify when out of bloom, so use some identification on the pot or on a name stake.

On the serious side of hybridizing, where we want to develop a new or improved plant, we must prepare for several years of selection before we start to see plants with the qualities that we are trying to create. We also need to keep careful records of the crosses we have made. The first step is to figure out what the realistic end goal is, and then slowly and carefully work towards it. No matter what the goal, start by working with good plants – remember the silk purse from a sow's ear story?

When you start to draw up your hybridizing 'blueprint', keep in mind that there are many qualities that you can work on and improve besides the flower color. You can improve flower size and shape, or increase the amount of bloom. Don't forget other areas of the plant such as the foliage, the overall size of the plant, and the growth habit. No matter how pretty the flower is, nobody will want to grow it if it is hard to keep compact or if it does not have good looking foliage that should compliment the bloom. Perhaps your goal may be variegation, such as we see with many new streptocarpus varieties today. Another goal that is popular both with streptocarpus and sinningias is hybridizing for scent – perhaps that is a goal that could bring you the sweet smell of success!

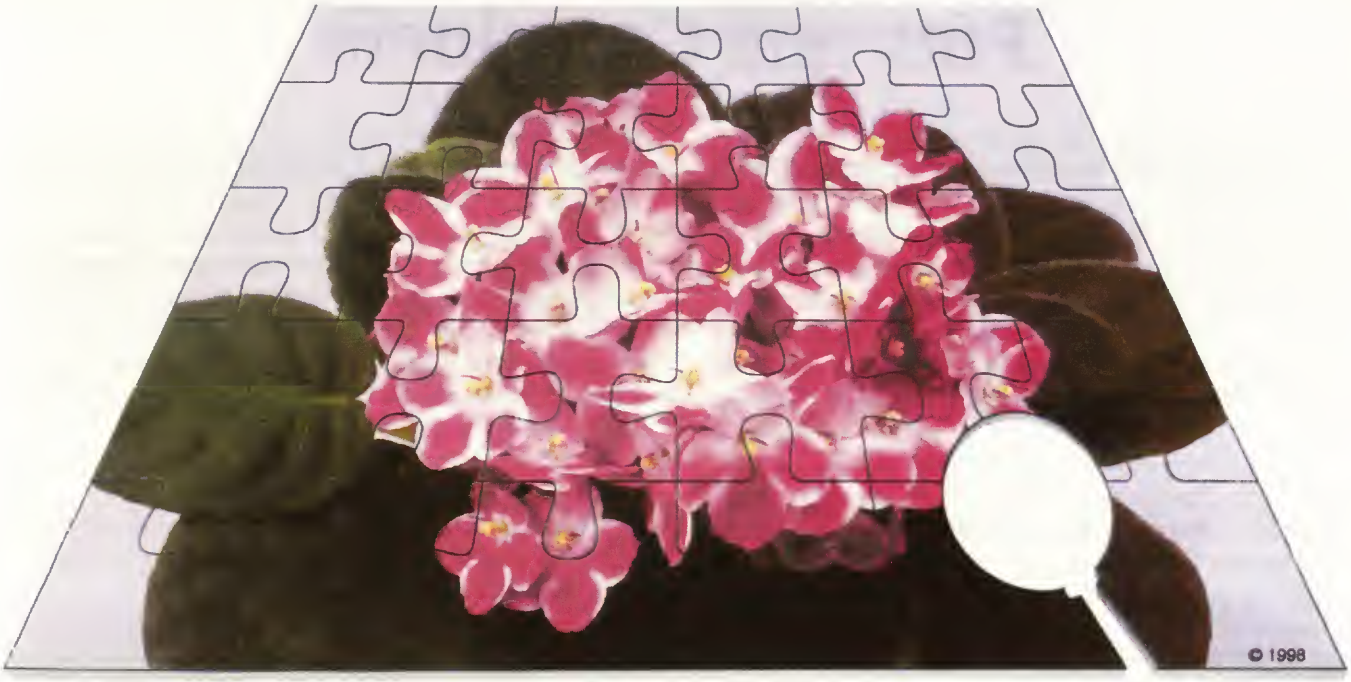
The two seedlings of eumorpha-type sinningias seen above are from the same seed pod, but they show very different growth habits. Grown under the same lights, the plant on the left exhibits a preferred compact growth with little space between the leaf stalks, unlike the lanky plant on the right.



*The Sinningia above had a very attractive pink bloom with dark maroon stripes on the lower lobes and into the throat; however, this **Sinningia eumorpha** x **S. sellovii** cross had leaves that were eight inches in length - far too big to be popular!*

*This **Sinningia 'Barrie Berry'** (l mini) x **Sinningia 'Simcoe Surprise'** (eumorpha-type) has more potential because the leaves are half the size of the hybrid to the left. This plant with a pink tube and large red spots is tentatively called "Simcoe Clown'.*

From African Violet and Gesneriad News



What's Missing From This Picture?

Chances are, few of today's garden centers know as much about growing African Violets as you do. No doubt, this explains why so many knowledgeable Violet growers have a hard time finding the products they need. For anyone who knows what it takes to grow beautiful, full-blooming African Violets, it can be like putting together a puzzle, only to find there's a piece missing. We know the feeling. That's why we started the Selective Gardener, a plant care supplier that specializes in products for African Violets.

Everything You Need to Grow Beautiful, Full-Blooming African Violets

The Selective Gardener makes it easy to get the products you need. As a plant care supplier that specializes in African Violets, the Selective Gardener carries a full line of plant care products with brand names like Optimara.

- Fully-dissolving, urea-free fertilizers
- Self-watering devices such as the Watermaid and the new, spill-proof Optimara WaterShip
- Ultralight, pH-balanced potting media
- Pots, trays and plant covers
- Show accessories and more

From Leaf Cuttings to Finished Violets

In addition to plant care products, the Selective Gardener offers African Violets in several pot sizes, including genuine Miniatures. You can also order leaf cuttings from all of the available Optimara and Rhapsodie varieties.

A Complete African Violet Resource

The Selective Gardener is a complete African Violet resource. Send for the Selective Gardener catalog, and you will find offers for plant care products, Violets and leaf cuttings, even books and posters. Or go online, and you will find even more. At the Selective Gardener's internet site (http://www.selectivegardener.com), you will have access to a number of resources not available anywhere else.

- Growing tips from the world famous Holtkamp Greenhouses
- Complete interactive Violet identification guide
- Links to other useful sites such as Doctor Optimara, a symptom-based, interactive guide for diagnosing pests and pathogens
- Reviews of African Violet products

(**Tip:** If you do not have access to the internet, try your public library. Many libraries, now, provide computers for public use, as well as helpful assistance for anyone wanting to go online.)

The Selective Gardener Catalog

To receive the Selective Gardener catalog, send $1 (which will be credited to your first order) with your name and address to:

The Selective Gardener
6011 Martingale Lane
Brentwood, TN 37027

Or visit us online at
http://www.selectivegardener.com.

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Pots and Containers

by Andre Savaria

It's good from time to time to return to basic principles to check if we couldn't improve our methods of culture. Are there not some details which we neglect? The following things are known to most amateur growers of the African violet, but I believe it is good sometimes to recall them.

Culture in pots and containers is a creation of the human spirit; it does not exist in nature. Still it is not a recent development; the famous Gardens of Babylon which date from more than 2,500 years ago were, in fact, culture in containers.

Many centuries ago, the Chinese developed the culture of penjing, and the Japanese, that of bonsai. In the two cases, the goal of this culture is to achieve miniature trees which imitate the appearance of the adult trees we see in nature. Here the plant is modified in the size of the branches and the roots to achieve the foreseen goal, and the container is chosen as a function of the aesthetic of the whole. The positioning of the trunk and the branches according to a plan is achieved in stages with the help of metallic wire wound around the stems when they are still flexible. Sometimes branches are grafted. The plant must adapt to the technique. This technique is so well developed that it permits achieving hundred-year old trees with a height of 1 1/2 to 3 feet, twenty or thirty times smaller than in nature.

In the West we have sought on the whole to adapt the technique to the characteristics of the plant. In the last century, some of the middle class citizens in Europe and in America had *orangeries* in their homes. These were greenhouses in which they grew tropical fruit trees in tubs, usually of wood. It was at this time that the culture of houseplants in pots began. Here was born the famous baked clay pot which is still quite popular today. It has the advantage of breathing, as the sides are not completely impermeable. At the same time, it is heavy and particularly fragile.

The plastic pot appeared about fifty years ago. It is light and strong. Today it is used in the sale and culture of most houseplants. With recent developments in horticulture, a great number of containers have appeared; cellular trays of different types and different sizes, pots of all forms for greenhouse culture and sale of outdoor plants. Most of these containers are of plastic materials. Some of them are useful to amateur growers of indoor plants; a cellular tray and transparent dome for cuttings or seeds, for example.

There is a sort of classification of round pots, and it is useful to know:

The "Standard" pot with height equal to diameter;

The "Azalea" pot with a height about equal to three-quarters of its diameter;

The "Pan" pot with a height equal to about two-thirds of its diameter. It is possible to obtain a 5" pot of the "Pan" type made in the United States having a height equal to half its diameter. It is useful for growing trailing *Saintpaulia*.

The type and size of pot are chosen according to the size and the root system of the plant. When a plant is grown in a pot too small, its growth is slowed. If the pot is too big, the esthetic of the whole is greatly affected, and determining the amount of water to add at watering is more difficult. The parts of the soil where there are no roots may stay too wet, and after a time, this can induce root rot. For African violets, the diameter of the pot should be about equal to a third of the diameter of the crown.

For plants with fine roots which stay for the most part near the surface of the soil, like African violets and the other gesneriads, choose the least deep pots possible.

For plants with stronger roots which reach deeper in the soil, choose deeper pots. "Standard" pots usually suit. Special pots have been developed for plants with taproots; for young trees, there are pots with a height equal to two and more times their diameter.

For plants with creeping or trailing stems like the epiphytic gesneriads (*Columnea, Aeschynanthus*, etc.) or plants with stolons like *Episcia*, you can use hanging baskets. There are two types. One type is plastic with a reservoir at the bottom to recover the surplus water from watering. These are especially suitable for the house. The other type is woven of metal strands in which is placed uncomposted peat moss which serves as the soil container. These are suited to culture in the greenhouse or out of doors, having no reservoir to retain surplus water.

The most usual pots for African violet culture are the following:

2 1/8" and 2 1/4" Standard pots for miniature African violets and young plants;

2 1/4" and 3" Standard pots for semiminiature African violets;

4" Azalea pots and 6" Pan pots for standard African violets.

For micro-miniature plants like certain African violets and the smallest *Sinningia*, there are three types of small pots made in the United States:

1 1/4" in diameter by 1 1/4" in height; 1 3/8" in diameter by 1 1/8" in height; 2" in diameter by 1 3/4" in height.

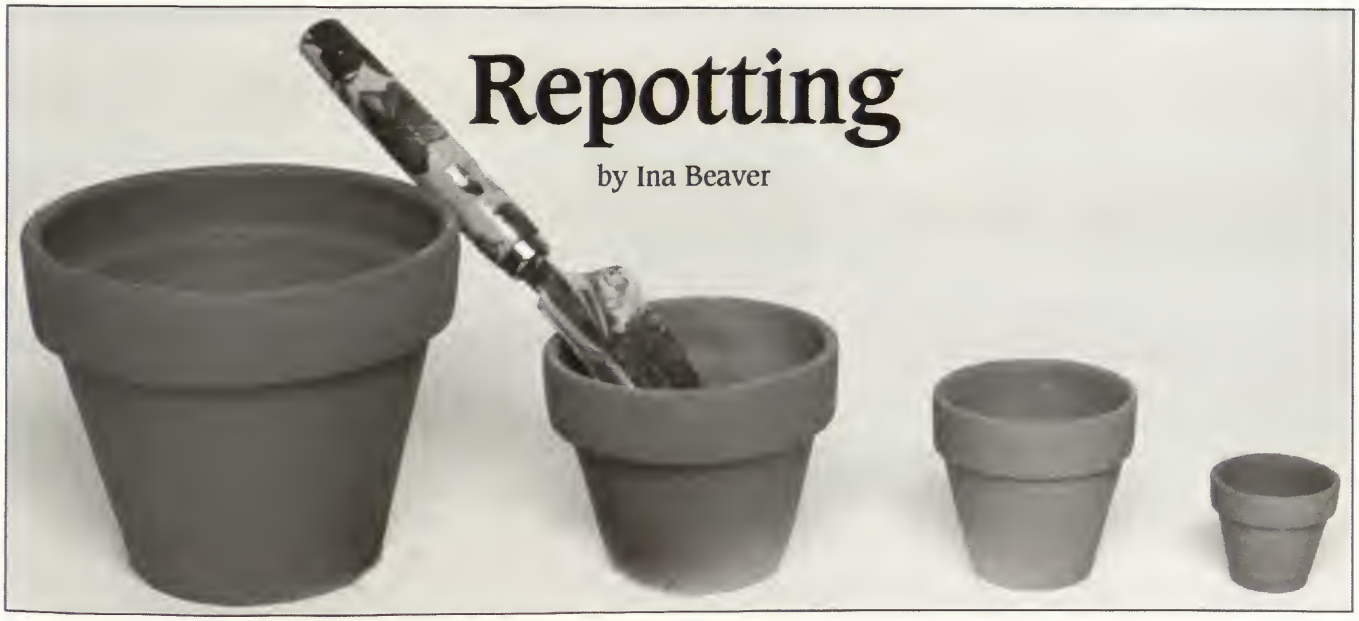
For African violets when they become too big for ordinary pots, you can use large saucers with a fairly high rim which have had holes added for drainage. You can easily find saucers up to 16" in diameter. There are even larger ones.

In recent years, certain ceramists have made fancy ceramic pots for African violets. These pots have a double shell, a base glazed on the interior as well as the exterior which serves as a reservoir for the water and the pot itself which contains the violet. The bottom of the pot and the sides to a height of about

2" are not glazed either on the interior or on the exterior. The upper part of the pot widens out to rest on the top of the reservoir so that the bottom is dipped in the water in the reservoir. The upper part of the pot is glazed to harmonize with the base, and the general effect is very ornamental. Because the unglazed ceramic of the bottom of the pot is permeable, the water in the reservoir moistens the soil automatically. Unfortunately, the ceramic of the pots is not permeable to the same degree from one pot to the other; some pots allow too much water to pass, others too little. Very few give satisfactory results.

After some time, the "Texas Style" pot was developed. You take a "Standard" type pot and pierce holes through the sides of the pot every inch around the circumference at a height of about 1" to 1 1/2" according to the size of the pot. Fill the pot with perlite up to the level of the holes and above that add the soil with the plant. Keep water in the saucer constantly. Watering is done by capillary action in the perlite while the holes contribute to drainage and aeration of the roots. The system is effective but seems to have been somewhat abandoned. The "Oyama Planters" advertised in the African Violet Magazine are a modified version of this.

Editor's Note: This article is a translation of *"Les pots et les contenants"* by Andre Savaria which appeared in *Chatter*, volume 42, number 3, July - September 1997, pages 33-36, publication of the AVS of Canada. Translation by Jim Toms.



Repotting

by Ina Beaver

As a general rule, miniatures and semiminiatures should be repotted about every four months, standards every six months. Miniatures prefer 2 1/4" pots. Many will grow larger if kept in 2 1/2" or 3" pots. They should not, but some cultivars do. Semiminiatures can be grown in 2 1/4", 2 1/2" or 3" squatty pots. Size of the leaf depends not only on its genes, but how often it is repotted and how much of the root ball was removed when repotted. I personally remove about half of the soil and roots and also the loose surface soil which retains much of the excess fertilizer.

I start standard sized plants in 3" pots, and when they become wider than 9" across, I repot them to a 4" pot and later to a 5" squatty pot. Rule of thumb: the pot should be 1/3 the diameter of the plant. When placing the plant into a deeper pot, I put a bit of soil in the bottom of the pot, put the old pot (sans plant) inside the new one, and fill the sides with moist fresh soil, then slip the plant into the new pot. Usually about two outer rows of leaves are taken off or have died off, so I lightly scrape the stem, apply dry fungicide and/or rooting hormone (not necessary). You may also leave the plant for half an hour or so to slightly dry the wound before slipping the plant into the new soil. Then lightly fill in the area between the soil line and the top of pot, leaving about 1/2" of area to water. I also remove all bloom and bud stalks at this time. The plant will either grow new roots and leaves or bloom. Yes, a newcomer hates to remove leaves and bloom, but it's best for the plant.

I have also been asked how growers produce the huge heads of bloom on plants entered in a show. Minis and semis should be stripped back and repotted in fresh soil about three months before a show, standards have, no doubt, been disbudded for months. Earlier on, experienced growers allow one bloom stalk to grow to make sure its blooms were true to the variety. Generally, the disbudding schedule is followed for standards only. Disbud variegated leafed varieties for the last time nine weeks before show, double blossomed eight weeks, single blossomed six weeks. All this requires luck as well as skill, weather, temperature, proper watering and fertilizing, and still, all of us know what it is like to leave a prospective show plant at home!

From *Chatter*, publication of the AVS of Canada

Showcase

Wrangler's Savage Beauty

Exhibited by: **Susan Anderson**
Hybridized by: **W. Smith**
Standard

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Buckeye Vavoom

Grown & Hybridized by:
Pat Hancock
Standard

Photo Credit: **P. Hancock**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Candy Fountain

Exhibited by: **Barbara Hosteler**

Hybridized by: **I. Fredette**

Standard Trailer

Making It Through The Door And Into The Showroom

by Suzanne Ress

Your African violets look fabulous. All your TLC has paid off. Now you start getting ready for the show.

The most frustrating time for a would-be exhibitor is the time between the plants' arrival at the show hall and their placement on the display table to be judged. Here are a few tips to make the process of Classification and Entry a little less frustrating and a lot smoother.

First: Make a list of all the plants that you might enter.

Include everything. Then use First Class (the program available from AVSA that has a listing and descriptions of almost all registered and listed plants) and print out a list with descriptions of all the possible entries. If you don't have First Class, ask around. There are a lot of people who have it and who would be happy to print out a list for you. Do not do this step the day before the show, if you are asking someone else to do it for you. This should be done 1-2 weeks beforehand. Then read each description and make sure that it matches the plant that you have. If it doesn't, do not try to enter that plant under that name.

Second: Find your copy of the Schedule for the show.

Read through to see what classes you want to enter. If you have several nice specimens of the same plant, you might want to check to see if it can be entered in more than one category; for example, an older standard sized African violet could be entered in an appropriate color class for Standards, in a Vintage class (depending on when it was hybridized), in the AVSA Collection class if it is a registered variety, and so on. The Schedule can open up a variety of ways you can enter your plants.

Third: Put the Schedule Class information on your list of plants.

Bring this list with you to the show hall. This will save you time in two places. Classification will check each plant against its official description. If you have already pre-checked, then there should be no hold-up while the identity of the plant is debated and researched. Classification will also carefully check for any signs of bugs, disease, or suckers. If you have already checked out the plants under a strong light, then this step will also be completed quickly. The second big time-saver will be at Entries, where your plants will be officially entered into the show records. If you have already noted the class you want each plant to go into, then the Entries Clerk does not have to go through the Schedule and read the plant description to figure out each class for each plant. This is a HUGE time saver, and will get you big brownie points with any Entry Clerk, especially when the actual time slot for accepting entries is limited.

Fourth: Before you pack your plants for transport, do all your grooming and checking.

Use a strong light, and check that the plants are clean, bug-free, and sucker-free. Classification should not have to bring problems to your attention. You should bring grooming supplies with you to clean up any transportation-caused mishaps, but the show staff are not there to provide cleaning and consulting services for the exhibitor, even though they have been known to do so. You are taking valuable time away from the other exhibitors and adding stress to those who are trying to "get the show on the road" when you expect others to do your work. On the other hand, most clubs have members who would be happy to help out beforehand. So if you feel uncertain about your grooming abilities, ask a club member to come over and give you a hands-on lesson a couple days before the show, when you both have time.

Designers: Work out your set-up for the design ahead of time, and arrive with all the supplies and tools you will need, along with the entry information from the Schedule.

If there is someone in your club who provides extra blossoms for the designs for final set-up just before judging, arrange this with them ahead of time, so they can remember to put the blossoms in water the night before to harden them off. You might want to gently remind them the night before, to make doubly sure the blossoms are there the next morning.

With a little advance preparation, each exhibitor can make their show experience more enjoyable, and make the processes for those putting on the show run more smoothly and be less stressful.

From *Ye Bay Stater*,
publication of the Bay State AVS

My Watering Techniques

by Robert Clark, Jr

When I bought my home, one of its benefits was an ample growing area in the basement. This has been a goal of mine for some time, because the last place in which I was able to grow in the basement produced many blue ribbon plants come show time. After moving in and getting partially settled, priorities made me set up the plant stands, get the plants unpacked, and back under lights.

At first, I just set them up in the trays to get used to the space. Then I realized the problem with the basement. There was no sink, and water would have to be trudged up and down stairs from the kitchen. Ugh! What a chore this was going to be. I seriously contemplated giving up my office in order to grow violets and moving the office into the basement. Well, it would be convenient when working on membership files, I could do laundry...then an idea hit me. The washing machine!

I quickly made a pilgrimage to a home improvement store and purchased several short lengths of hosing, a couple of Y shaped hose fittings, and a pump-pressurized sprayer. A sprayer? Yes! Using a sprayer, I figured I would be able to top-water each and every plant individually and be able to give it some personal attention. I attached the Y fittings onto the hot and cold water spigots for the washing machine and ran the two hoses into another Y fitting so the water coming out would be warm. I filled a big bucket with water and realized I was going to have problems with getting the water into the sprayer. So, instead, I just put the fertilizer and Superthrive right into the sprayer and added water.

This system worked very well for me until I had to go away for a few days. I set up a wicking system and got the plants on individual reservoirs. It has worked GREAT! I now use the sprayer system to fill the reservoirs and to leach all the plants every other month [or so].

This system has saved me time and toil, and still has let me give individual attention to each plant. In hot weather, when I have had such problems in the past with wicking, I will be watching closely to make sure I don't get a lot of rot setting in. If need be, I will empty the reservoirs and top water exclusively for the hot months. However, I don't anticipate having the need to do this because the basement is naturally much cooler than the rest of the house. Only time will tell.

Most of the plants I entered in a recent show looked very good. That's not the point, however. The point is the quantity I was able to have ready. Never before have I been able to enter so many horticulture exhibits.

From *Ye Bay Stater*, publication of the Bay State AVS

Tip from a New Grower

by Jana Strathmann • Indianapolis, IN

Do you have trouble getting your wicks into the proper holes, or has a plant dried out because the wick didn't make it into the water?

To prevent this from happening to my plants, I take the smallest "sinker", or "split shot", used for fishing, and pinch it onto the bottom of my wicks. This added weight keeps it from twisting and curling, and even from snagging on the egg crate.

AVML November Update

Download the AVML Update
from the AVSA Website <avsa.org>,
or send $1.00 to the office
AVSA
2375 North St.
Beaumont, Texas 77702
and a hard copy will be mailed to you.

Showcase

Wrangler's Dixie Celebration

Exhibited by: **Jan Shrader**
Hybridized by: **W. Smith**
Large

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Petrocosmea forrestii

Best Other Gesneriad (Commercial)
AVSA 2004 National Show
Exhibited by: **Joyce Stork**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Spring Kiss

New Introduction

AVSA 2004 National Show

Exhibited by: **Paul Sorano**

Hybridized by: **L. Lyon Greenhouses**

Standard

Worth Repeating .....

IFFY PLANT STAND

FROM PVC PIPE

by Kenneth W. Barbi

If you could build a basic plant stand for $20, and then add lights and trays, wouldn't it be worth it? Commercial vendors sell comparable stands made out of metal for as much as $266. With a little bit of time spent following these instructions, a substantial PVC pipe plant stand could be yours.

MATERIAL LIST

All the following parts are commonly available at large hardware/home building stores:

8 Ten foot 3/4" white PVC Pipes
34 PVC 3/4" Tee Connectors
4 PVC 3/4" 90 Degree Elbow Connectors
1 Can of PVC Adhesive
6 1 5/8" Diameter White Wheels (OPTIONAL)
6 3/4" Wheels sockets (OPTIONAL)
4 2' x 4' Egg Crate for Ceiling Fluorescent Lights (OPTIONAL)
1 Heavy Duty light timer (OPTIONAL)
5 2' x 4' White Plastic Ceiling Fluorescent Light Covers (OPTIONAL)

Additional items can be purchased from a number of AVM advertisers such as Indoor Gardening Supplies:

4 48" double Fluorescent Plant Lite Fixtures with Chains (IGS Model #PLD42WS-C)
16 Standard 11" x 22" x 2-1/2" Perma-Nest Plant Trays

TRAYS

I use two different approaches on trays. Several of my stands use four standard 11" x 22" x 2-1/2" Perma-Nest Plant Trays per shelf covered by a 2' x 4' white egg crate that you use for covering ceiling fluorescent fixtures. I do community wick watering in this arrangement. My other stands use a 2' x 4' white translucent plastic ceiling fluorescent fixture cover I spray paint black. The black reflects less light than leaving them white so my leaves don't tend to hug the pots by growing down to the stand. I use this arrangement to hold individual plant reservoirs made from plastic containers such as margarine containers. In both cases, I use the hanging fluorescent light fixtures under the shelves to support the trays with water or the plastic shelf individual watering containers. I also put the white plastic 2' x 4' sheet under the green trays, if I use the community watering system, to catch water under the trays if I spill it.

LIGHTS

I prefer professionally built two (2) light units with low power ballasts such as those sold by Indoor Gardening Supplies of Detroit, Michigan. The Sylvania Wide Spectrum lamps are 11 inches apart, and the light fixtures can be daisy-chained together by plugging them into one another. After the last light, plug the string into a heavy duty 24 hour timer.

CONSTRUCTION

Cut the ten foot lengths of PVC pipe into the following lengths:

Item 1.	8	48" (for the wider part of the shelves)
Item 2.	10	21 1/16" (for the sides of the shelves)
Item 3.	8	12 3/4" (for top 2 levels to provide closer spacing for minis/semiminis)
Item 4.	8	15 1/2" (for bottom 2 levels for standards)
Item 5.	16	1 3/8" (connectors for the shelf members)

ASSEMBLY

Step 1 – Glue PVC Tee connectors to both ends of all the Item 1s and to eight of the Item 2s. Make sure both the PVC Tee Connectors are parallel to each other.

Step 2 – Using Item 5 connectors, glue together the long and short lengths of shelf supports made in Step 1 to form a rectangular shelf. I suggest doing this job by placing both pieces against a square wall in your house.

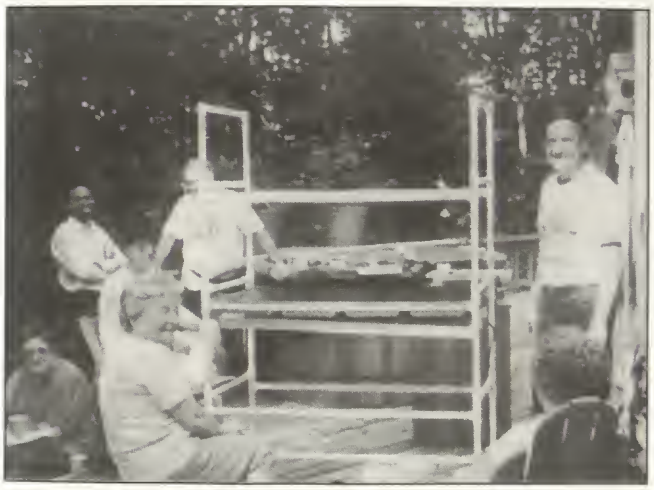
Step 3 – Glue PVC 90 Degree Elbow connectors to two of the Item 2s for the top light support. Make sure both the PVC 90 Degree Elbow Connectors are parallel to each other.

Step 4 – Using eight Item 4s, connect the bottom, second, and third shelves together. DON'T GLUE. I use pressure to keep the shelves together and not glue. In this way, I can take the shelves apart for transport or for making further adjustments on the distances between lights and plants.

Step 5 – Using eight Item 3s, connect the fourth shelf and top light support together. DON'T GLUE. I use pressure to keep the shelves together and not glue. Again, in this way, I can take the shelves apart for transport or for making further adjustments on the distances between lights and plants.

Step 6 – Use chained light fixtures, support trays, or plastic shelves with the light fixtures. Plug them together daisy-chain style and into the timer. Connect to AC.

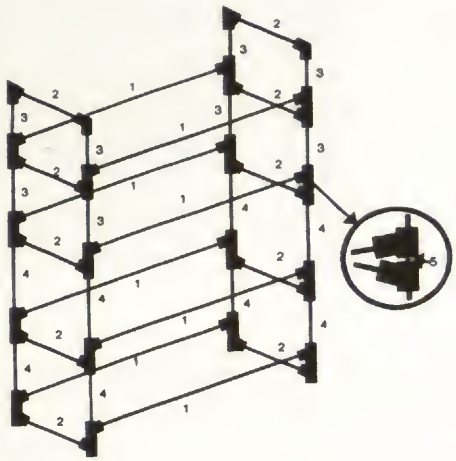
SUPPORTING THE BOTTOM SHELF



When I use Perma-Nest Trays, I divide the long pipes on the bottom shelf in half and install PVC Tee Connectors (with optional wheels) to support the trays. If I only use a plastic shelf, I support the middle center line of the plastic shelf at both ends and in the middle so that plants on their reservoirs don't bend the shelf.

CLEANING THE STAND

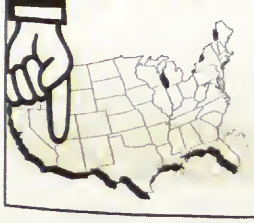
Depending how neat you are, you may want to clean off the black printing on the PVC pipes. This is not as easy as it sounds. You'll need to use lacquer thinner or acetone with a piece of fine steel wool. Work on the marks until they come off. Do this outdoors since the cleaner is very flammable, and wear a face mask such as a 3M No. 7251 Permissible Chemical Cartridge for Organic Vapors which you should be using when you spray pesticides on your African violets. This mask is available in the same hardware/home building stores where you bought the material, paint specialty stores, or in your larger garden stores that sell large quantities of pesticides.



TOTAL

When you add the cost of the plant stand materials (apx $20), the lights (apx $75 x 4 = $300), egg crate (apx $10 x 4 = $40), plastic covers or shelves (10 x 5 = $50), and Perma-Nest Plant Trays (apx $5 x 16 = $80), you pay $490 which is less than a pre-made stand when you add all the extras that don't come with it. Doing it yourself allows several unique options. For example, if you get shop lights for about $10 per unit with standard cool white fluorescent bulbs and decide to use just plastic shelves without the Perma-Nest Plant Trays, you can build a plant stand that costs $20 + 4 times $10 (shop light) + 5 times $10 (plastic shelves) = $50, or $110. If you select shop lights, you must make the vertical supports (Items 3 & 4) longer to accommodate the extra thickness of the lights. Good luck with your project.

Coming Events



November 6 & 7 - MISSOURI
Mid America AVS
25th Annual Judged Show/Sale
Loose Park Garden Center
5200 Pennsylvania Ave.
Kansas City, MO
Both Days: 10am - 3pm
Info: Fred Inbody (816) 373 - 6915
Email: kskd1@juno.com

November 20 & 21 - CALIFORNIA
AV Council of Southern
California Judged Show/Sale
Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Drive
LaCanada, CA
Hours: Nov 20 - 9am - 4pm
Nov 21 - Noon - 3pm
Info: Nancy DiPaola (626) 919 - 2594
Email: violetjiggs@aol.com

Showcase

Optimara Ontario

Best Standard, White Blossoms
AVSA 2004 National Show
Exhibited by: **Pat Richards**
Hybridized by: **Holtkamp**
Standard

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Buckeye Obsession

Grown & Hybridized by:
Pat Hancock
Standard

Photo Credit: **P. Hancock**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

"San Xavier Mission Del Bac"

Exhibited by: **Elmer Godeny**

"Wick Watering" (It's not for everyone)

by Sharon Holtzman

For more than twenty years of growing violets, I had never heard of wick watering. I dumped cold water straight from the tap on my 'window grown' violets and could kill them as fast as anyone I knew.

In the autumn of 1988, I saw a variegated African violet in a 4" pot at a florist shop for $9.95. Since I had never seen a variegated African violet, I thought this must certainly be some sort of rarity, and 'Tiger' came home with me. I received a culture folder with my plant and immediately joined AVSA. That first magazine got me hooked, and I soon ordered so many plants from so many of the commercial dealers it was ridiculous! When I read an article on wick watering, I thought this would be a perfect solution to keeping all of these new acquisitions watered. It did work great for me - great for keeping my plants watered under my lights. This was not only the way that I did it for the next eight years, but I preached wick watering to everyone who came into my plant room and every group that I spoke to at garden clubs, etc.

Over the last couple of years, I started getting feedback from people who were growing my wick watered plants. The feedback was disturbing because many were not doing well. I finally realized that all of these reports were coming from people who were growing on windowsills in my area in the dead of winter. My own violets, snug and warm under my lights 12 hours a day, were sucking up water out of those reservoirs like nobody's business. It's not unusual during winter in Cincinnati to go days at a time without ever seeing the sun. Depending on what type or quality of window a person has, the temperature right at the glass, particularly at night, can be twenty degrees lower than it is in the middle of the room. The growing medium was just staying too wet and too cold!

I made the following suggestions to those people who were having problems with their violets:

1. Pull the wick out of the pot.
2. Water only when, after poking a finger down into the growing medium, it feels dry about 1" down.
3. Never use water that is cooler than room temperature ... tepid is better.
4. Never get water on the leaves of a window-grown violet unless it can be taken away from the window to dry.
5. If watering from the bottom, never let the extra water remain in the saucer for more than thirty minutes.
6. Finally, slip a piece of cardboard between the violet and the glass during very cold nights as a wonderful insulator to protect the violet from the cold.

Following these instructions, I was so pleased to hear that these people had saved many violets.

My personal reason for not wick watering anymore (aside from the fact that I may be a masochist) is because I was becoming a lazy grower. A lot can happen in the life of a wick-watered violet when you don't have to look at it for 2-3 weeks as opposed to a top-watered plant that you have to look at every 2-3 days:

1. That tiny patch of powdery mildew can take over the entire plant.
2. Those spent blossoms, if not removed in a timely fashion, can create a haven for pests and disease.
3. Even violets grown under lights can have their symmetry unbalanced if they are not looked at and turned regularly.
4. Does anyone have proof that violets don't get lonely if they don't have human contact for a couple weeks?

So give some thought to your own growing conditions and which watering method might be best for your violets.

From *The Violet Connection*, publication of the Ohio State AVS

Why Use Bleach?

by Cheryl Salatino

Bleach is an important part of potting preparation and clean-up. Liquid chlorine bleach is used for sanitizing both pots and tools. When reusing pots or preparing new ones, it is best to wash them thoroughly in a 1/3 bleach and 2/3 warm water solution. You will prevent the spread of any fungus or other undesirable diseases. It is also a good practice to clean your light stand trays at least once per year with a bleach solution to remove any stains, algae, or residue.

Always wear gloves when using a bleach solution. Bleach can dry out or irritate your skin.

From *Ye Bay Stater*, publication of the Bay State AVS

Keep Those African Violets Blooming

by Joyce Stork

From the AVSA Web Site *Frequently Asked Questions*

Most African violets should be blooming regularly throughout the year. Some varieties will always have one or two flowers open. Some varieties burst into heavier bloom and then rest briefly before bursting into bloom again. A few varieties are more reluctant to bloom except in excellent light, but even these should be blooming once or twice a year. If violets do not bloom, there is usually a problem with the growing conditions.

Light

Violets need bright light to bloom well. If they are window grown, violets should be set within twelve inches of the glass; the window should be fairly large to allow generous light; there should be some light filtering, such as sheer drapes or trees outside. Do be careful of heat, however, since some window areas get quite warm. Temperatures should stay near 72°. Violets that are not getting enough light will seem to reach upward. Leaves will not lay flat in a perfect circle around the pot. Whenever a grower sees this, efforts should be taken to increase the amount of light the plant receives.

Violets can be given artificial light when no good windows are available, using any kind of fluorescent tubes. Violets should be placed so that the light is just twelve inches above the foliage, and the lights should be turned on for about twelve hours a day. Again, choose a growing area that is about 72° most of the time.

Fertilizer

Often a lack of bloom can be blamed on inadequate fertilizer. Violets need to be fertilized weekly with a good quality fertilizer designed for them. There are many good products on the market. Most growers prefer to use a formula that is mixed in the water and used every time violets are watered. If you choose to use a fertilizer that recommends monthly fertilizing, you can dilute it to be used weekly. If directions call for one teaspoon to a gallon of water monthly, simply change it to 1/4 teaspoon to a gallon. Fertilizer is quite stable when mixed up, and can be saved from week to week if it is not all used at once.

Soil

Blossoms form when roots are healthy and well-developed. Violet roots are very fine and hair-like. If violets are potted in heavy or packed soils, the roots will not develop and flowering will be sparse. It is hard to purchase good quality premixed violet soil. Most products labeled for violets are using sedge peat which is black and smeary when rubbed between the fingers. Rarely do these commercial potting mixes have enough lighteners such as perlite or vermiculite for violets to thrive. For many growers, the only solution is to mix it themselves. One commonly used recipe is: 1 part milled sphagnum peat moss, 1 part vermiculite, and 1 part perlite, with a bit of charcoal tossed in. The texture is most important. This mix will not pack down even when wet, leaving lots of air passages for roots to grow into. When repotting violets, be especially careful not to press down on the soil or pack it around the roots.

Pots

Along with preferring the soil to be loose and airy, violets like to be in small pots. Generally the pots should be four inches deep (or less) and only one-third the size of the leaf span. If your violet is twelve inches across, it should be growing in a pot that is four inches in diameter and four inches deep. When well-developed roots find the walls of their pot, they will often begin heavy flowering.

Humidity

Dry air can cause violet buds to dry off before ever becoming visible to the naked eye. Be sure that there is some humidity around the plant, and avoid drafts from heating or air conditioning. Humidity can be provided with a small open dish of water placed next to the pot.

Consistent Watering

Uneven watering can also cause buds to dry off prematurely. Try to keep soil evenly moist all of the time. Avoid allowing your violet to become so dry that leaves wilt, but also avoid allowing your plant to stand in water for more than one-half hour (to avert crown rot problems).

Remove Suckers

Be sure that there is only one crown of leaves growing in the pot. Sometimes violets will form suckers, resulting in multiple crowns or centers of growth. These suckers should be removed into their own pot or destroyed, so that a single crown is left. Most violets do not bloom well when crowded in a pot.

A Gentle Threat

Occasionally a grower is doing everything well, and a violet will still stubbornly remain out of bloom while developing beautiful leaves. Botanists would say that it is in a vegetative mode. In order to switch it to a fruiting (flowering) mode, the plant needs a gentle threat that will trigger a "survival of the species" response. Squeezing the sides of the pot or gently thumping the pot on the table surface will disturb roots enough to trigger a panic response, often causing the violet to begin setting flowers. It sounds silly, but there is good science to support this action.

'Br. Paddy' – A possible *S. confusa* Clone

'Br. Paddy' – A possible *S. confusa* Clone from the Mather Collection

Dr. Jeff Smith
Indiana Academy
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
email: Jsmith4@bsu.edu

Another nice species clone from the Mather collection is the plant labeled as 'Br. Paddy'. This plant does not have a Mather collection number, but was labeled as "M" or R6664 by Mrs. S.A. Robertson during her inventory of the Mather collection. This plant is recorded as being collected from the Usambara Mountains, but the collection notes do not indicate if it was the East or West Usambara Mountains. Although the records don't indicate for certain, I speculate that the name 'Br. Paddy' refers to Brother Paddy MacNamara, an orchidist and collector of *Saintpaulia* species. A 1986 African Violet Magazine article, "The Mystery of the Amboni Caves," written by Sylva Mather mentions that Br. MacNamara gave *Saintpaulia* plants to Mrs. Mather. It seems reasonable that the plant 'Br. Paddy' may be one of those plants. Cuttings of this plant were sent to Iowa State University in 1993. I obtained cuttings of 'Br Paddy' from Iowa State University in 1996.

'Br. Paddy' is a semi-miniature to standard rosette plant that has a tendency to sucker. The leaves are dark green in color with a lighter green reverse. The leaves are oval to round in shape and may reach 3-5 cm (1 1/2 to 2 inches) in diameter. The margins of the leaves are shallowly toothed over the entire edge and lack a distinct point at the tip. The leaf petioles are wiry and may have a reddish tint. The petioles also have a tendency to bend and present the leaf blade at a sharp upright angle. The hairs of leaves are long appressed, short appressed (LASA) as in other *S. confusa* clones and are usually easily visible to the naked eye.

The flowers of 'Br. Paddy' are about 1 cm in diameter and are usually found 5-11 per peduncle. The flowers are dark blue to purple in color and are presented in nice clusters above the foliage. The plant can be very floriferous, sometimes producing two peduncles per leaf. A mature, well-grown specimen may have 20-30 or more open flowers at one time.

'Br. Paddy' appears to be a clone of the species *S. confusa*. This identification is based on the rosette growth form, the LASA leaf hair formula, and the numerous dark colored flowers. All of these characteristics are similar to the description of *S. confusa* as compared to the other *Saintpaulia* species. *S. confusa* is also one of the species reported from the Amboni Cave area. If 'Br. Paddy' was indeed collected from that area, it fits the descriptions for *S. confusa* much more closely than it does those for *S. ionantha*. The DNA of 'Br. Paddy' has been examined and found to be within the *S. ionantha* complex, which, unfortunately, doesn't distinguish between *S. ionantha* and *S. confusa*.

I have found 'Br. Paddy' to be an easy species to grow, but a bit of a challenge to grow well. The twisting petioles sometimes make the plant a challenge to shape into a flat rosette. The plant does sucker and could be grown as a multiple crown plant. However, the number of flowers is greatly reduced under these conditions. I would recommend that the plant be pruned to a single crown for show purposes. This clone grows well as a cool species but will tolerate warmer conditions. Under cooler conditions, the leaf color is often slightly darker, and the flowers are a deeper blue-purple in color.

I have not used 'Br. Paddy' for hybridizing. If the twisted petioles are inherited in the offspring, it might be difficult to get good show quality hybrids using this species clone. However, the high bloom count is a plus and might be used to develop hybrids with good blooming characteristics. The foliage usually overlaps well with few gaps, another good show plant trait.

In conclusion, 'Br. Paddy' is an excellent plant from the Mather collection that does not follow the naming system of the other plants. It grows well in a variety of conditions and is very free blooming. With a little work, it has the potential for making a good species show plant.

Time to get Ready for the Show

by Iris Keating

All necessary supplies have been gathered, and my plants are going to be broken down, repotted, and started over. I will select ten violets that are the hardiest - invariably my favorites - and show the most promise to repot first. What do I look for? Does the foliage shape well? Petioles (leaf stems) should grow straight with little or no coaxing and be strong enough to prevent drooping. The outer leaves should form a perfect circle with every row above them overlapping to form an even pattern with no gaps or soil showing through.

Floriferousness - how well does the plant bloom? It should have numerous bloom stalks (pedicels) per cluster, not just 2 or 3 per peduncle (cluster stalk supporting the pedicels).

Strong peduncles - are blossoms supported by sturdy peduncles that stand proudly in the center above the crown, or do they sag and lie down on the foliage?

Is the color in both the blossoms and foliage bright and clear, remaining stable, or is it unpredictable and unreliable?

With miniature and semiminiature varieties, do they easily stay within size limits (not over a 6" diameter for minis or 8" for semis), or do you have to virtually bonsai them to maintain the correct size?

If the violets don't have necks that are too long, I strip off all but 2 or 3 rows of leaves and all blossoms and buds, removing 1/3 to 1/2 of each rootball. The plants will be repotted into shallow containers that are about 1/3 the foliage diameters, taking care to get the plants well centered.

If necks are too long, crowns will be severed with a sharp knife, leaving 1" stems. The brown outer crust on the stems will be gently removed with my thumbnail or a sucker plucker. Otherwise, the stems will not reroot.

After removing crowns, I prefer to immerse them in a mild soapsuds solution, swishing them around to remove all soil and dust from the leaves. They are rinsed thoroughly in tepid water at the sink and soaked in a solution of 10 drops Superthrive per gallon of lukewarm water for 15 minutes to revive and give them a boost.

Crowns are then turned upside down on the counter to dry and "harden off" the stem for about an hour before I pot them in a mixture of half planter mix (equal parts of Perlite, vermiculite, and horticultural charcoal) and half regular potting mix formula (8 parts Uni-Gro regular potting mix, 5 parts #2 Perlite, 4 parts vermiculite, and 1 part charcoal).

Newly repotted plants are kept in darkness or subdued light for 24-28 hours in covered sweater boxes or sealed plastic bags, creating a terrarium environment that allows the plants to rest. They are gradually moved back into their usual positions under the lights.

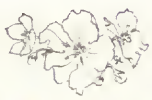
Potted crowns are placed in clear, covered plastic boxes or in individual plastic bags that are inflated by blowing into them with a straw (thereby adding CO2) and sealed with a twist tie. They are placed in subdued light for a week or so and gradually moved to good indirect light. They are usually rooted in 4 weeks.

Leaf support rings will be placed on all the plants as soon as possible, allowing for easier training and positioning of leaves. I prefer to use rings made from new or washed styrofoam meat trays for minis and semis, cutting vents in the styrofoam circles with an Exacto or sharp knife to allow air circulation.

My ten "favorites" will be given choice locations on the shelves and given ample growing room. They will be given TLC before my other plants and turned every day or so for even growth.

CARDINAL RULE: Remove any leaf that is smaller than the one above as soon as it is apparent. Check each week to be sure you do not have immature leaves or suckers on your plants.

From *The Violeteer*,
publication of the Pomona Valley AVS



ISOLATE!

by Lisa DiMambro

Isolate new plants away from the rest of your collection, preferably in another room; however, the opposite side of the room can do if your space is limited. Keep the plants isolated for at least three months, checking them frequently for signs of pests or disease.

If they develop a problem, it is much easier to treat the new plants rather than your whole collection, and you are not risking the rest of your plants.

From *Ye Bay Stater*, publication of the Bay State AVS

PESTS and DISEASES OF ROOTS

by Kerry Knight

While all of us admire our violets for their symmetry, very few of us give a lot of thought to the root system of the plant. The two main functions of the roots are to anchor the plant firmly and absorb water and minerals from the soil. Root problems generally show up in our plants as wilting leaves and stems and a sad look. Possible causes of a sad plant can be:

- Over watering.
- Plant allowed to dry out.
- Over feeding resulting in a build up in the soil of excessive fertilizer salts.
- Pests and diseases

The first two can be easily controlled. The **build up of soluble salts** (noticeable by the orange crust around the rim of the pot and on the drainage holes) can be treated by either leaching with water or re-potting.

Soil mealy bugs appear as white cottony specks or "webs" found in and around the soil and are often visible floating in reservoirs or on the wick. They eat and destroy the fine root hairs. Take crown cuttings and throw out badly affected plants. Treat other plants with Malathion spray.

Crown cuttings should be treated, by immersing them in a weak solution of bleach and a few drops of detergent, before replanting. Enclose the cutting in a plastic bag and examine the root ball after several weeks to ensure that the plant is free from bugs.

Nematodes are a lot less common in African violets. Plants appear tired and droopy. They appear as lumpy swelling on the roots. Take a crown cutting and discard the plant.

Fungus Gnats appear as small black flies that rise above the soil when disturbed. Plants appear tired looking. Treat with spray, or soil can be drenched with Malathion if the infestation is severe.

Springtails are small pale pests (sometimes jumping) visible in saucers and in the bottom of reservoirs. Plants may be slow to grow or drooping. Wash all containers, and if there are still a lot, drench with Malathion.

Root Rot causes plants to appear as drooping and tired. The roots are brown or black. Take a crown cutting and discard the root ball.

Crown Rot makes plants to appear drooping and tired. The plant is wobbly in the pot, and the stem is rotten at the base. Take a crown cutting, or leaf, and cut off all brown areas of stem and replant in fresh potting mix.

From the *Newsletter* of the Early Morn AV Group

The Birds & the Bees

Photos by John Beaulieu

*After inserting their beaks, the hummingbirds will pull the dangling **Sinningia sellovii** blooms up to a horizontal position. within days after the flowers have been pollinated, the stems bearing the developing seed pods move up above the stem out of the way of future pollinators.*

***Sinningia sellovii** is also a favorite flower of the hornets which climb right into the flower, helping pollination.*

*A hummingbird checks out **Achimenes 'Dark Salmon'**.*

From African Violet and Gesneriad News

PRODUCTS ON THE SHELVES AND WHAT THEY DO FOR US

by Nancy Robitaille

Nursery and hardware shelves are full to the brim with chemicals for this problem or that insect.

Safety precautions should be taken when using these poisons. Some are toxic to humans, some, less so.

1. Mix only enough spray or drench for one application.
2. Discard leftover chemical liquids in a safe place. This does not include the kitchen sink or the toilet since all water is collected, "sterilized" by chemicals and reused for our consumption. Probably one of the less noxious places to pour unwanted poisons is over shrubs outdoors that might have use for it, although this, too, will eventually get to our drinking water.
3. Chemicals, especially when mixed, can evaporate when left for a time and thus become stronger than needed. This may harm your plants.
4. Wear protective clothing when spraying. Chemicals which are sprayed may fall to the skin and enter the body. Carefully wash all exposed areas.
5. It is necessary to shake the chemicals while in the spray bottle so they do not settle, making the top portion weaker than the bottom.
6. Use the correct spray or drench for the insect you are poisoning.
7. Containers used in mixing chemicals should not be used for any other purpose.
8. Store chemicals in a safe, protected place. Children and pets may become poisoned with them.
9. Any unused or empty containers of chemicals should be disposed of in a safe manner.

HOW CHEMICAL POISONS ACT WITH INSECTS:

Three types of poisons are available for the eradication of insects. One is the stomach poisons that are sprayed on plants and act when insects eat the foliage. The second is contact insecticides which destroy insects by touching the adult or newly hatched insects, larvae, and eggs. Kelthane, Malathion 50, and Lindane (may no longer be available) are examples, some having both effects. All three give a fast kill and may serve as preventatives if regularly applied. The third type of insecticide is systemic which is slower, but the effect lasts longer.

No Pest Strips may help eliminate aphids, whiteflies, mealy bugs (foliar), thrips, and other insects when placed inside a plastic bag with a tray of plants. (Strip should not touch plant.) Raid House and Garden Bug Killer is also safe with African violets and easy to use.

CHEMICALS:

BENOMYL: (BENLATE). Use on botrytis blight, crown rot, powdery mildew.

CAPTAN: (Orthocide, Captan) Use on Crown rot and powdery mildew.

Cygon 2E Systemic: May be difficult to find. One-half teaspoon to gallon water.

DICOFOL: (KELTHANE) Use on cyclamen mite, broad mite, spider mite. This is moderately toxic to humans. One to one-and-a half teaspoons to a gallon water.

DIMETHOATE: (CYGON) Use for Root nematodes, foliar mealy bugs, black flies (fungus gnats), aphids, and mites

FERBAM: (FERBAM) Crown rot, powdery mildew. Not toxic to humans. Ferbam can stain leaves and flowers. Use Captan or benomyl instead.

MALATHION: (CYTHION) Aphids, foliar mealy bugs, whiteflies. Low toxicity to humans.

SULFUR: (SULFUR) Crown rot, mildew. A well-known fungicide.

Marathon – Mealy bugs. One-eighth to one-quarter teaspoon to a 2-3 inch pot.

PHYSAN: Controls African violet pathogens, algae on mats, wicks, reservoirs, trays, pots, benches and work surfaces. Controls damping off on seedlings and plants. Controls crown rot, powdery mildew, botrytis. Disinfects tools.

Avid – mites

Neem Oil (Dyna Grow) Thrips, foliar mealy bugs – makes a plant unpalatable to insects, and they starve.

Fungicide 3 (contains Neem)

RID (LICE TREATMENT SHAMPOO) Home-made remedy. Effective against spider mites and thrips. One teaspoon to a quart of water.

SAFER'S END-ALL: MITICIDE/INSECTICIDE/ACARICIDE

Kills all stages of Aphids, mites and whitefly, spider mites, spittle bugs, adult and nymph stages of thrips, flea beetles, caterpillars, mealy bugs, scale insects, and sugar ants. 20ml concentrate with one liter water

Milk: (Home-made remedy) Diluted milk may be painted onto powdery mildew.

Cinnamon: (Home-made remedy) May be dusted onto powdery mildew. Cinnamon is not easy to clean off leaves.

INSECTS:

APHIDS: Green, red, pink, black, brown, purple or white, winged and wingless, one-sixteenth to one-eighth inch long. Bodies are round to pear shaped. Insects have long legs and antennae. They may be found on new growing tips and under leaves. Aphids are sucking insects. Foliage and new growth may turn pale, curl up and die. Aphids leave secretions of honeydew which may host SOOTY MOLD, a black fungus.

Treatment: Remove insects with your fingers or apply alcohol to a cotton swab and touch each. Wash leaves with water after treatment with alcohol.

For heavy infestation, spray with malathion, one teaspoon to one gallon water or use orthene, follow directions on package. Repeat every 5 to 7 days until Aphids have been eliminated. Science Systemic is also recommended although this product may be hard to find.

OR: Drench each pot with a solution containing dimethoate, following directions on label. Repeat this drench after 7 days.

Preventative: Cleanliness in plant area. Drench plants each six months as above or spray once each month with insect spray such as Raid House and Garden Bug Killer.

BLACK FLIES: (FUNGUS GNATS) Black flies tend to swarm around plants. Insects are one-sixteenth inch long. These are nuisance insects and do little harm to African violets. When heavy infestations occur, root damage may result. This is caused by Black Fly larvae.

Treatment: Spray with an all-purpose house and garden spray or with Orthene. Should there be a heavy infestation, drench with dimethoate solution to kill larvae in the soil.

FOLIAR MEALY BUG: White cottony substance holds these bugs. This is found often in the leaf axils, on foliage, or into the crowns of the plant.

Treatment: Cotton swabs with alcohol will eliminate most if the infestation is light. Wash treated leaves. Repeat several times when insects are seen. For heavier infestations, drench or spray plant with a solution of dimethoate. Malathion or Orthene may be used as a spray.

Prevention: Drench soil each month with a solution of Malathion or Orthene. An all-purpose house and garden spray may be used each month.

MITES: Members of the spider family, mites are very tiny and almost invisible to the naked eye. Three types of mites infest African violets: Cyclamen mite, broad mite, or red spider mite. Treatment is the same for all three but symptoms are different.

CYCLAMEN MITE: Less than one-one hundredth (1/100) inch long. White, brown or amber in color.

Center becomes yellowish, brittle, and leaves twist and curl up. Leaves become excessively hairy. Flower buds are deformed and blotched. Plant growth is slowed, and plants seem stunted. Centers become an ash-like color. Leaf cuttings will carry the insect.

BROAD MITE: One one-hundred-fiftieth (1/150) of an inch long. More active than Cyclamen mites. Similar symptoms of Cyclamen mite except that leaves turn down instead of up. Broad mites feed on lower area of leaves causing the leaves to turn down.

RED SPIDER MITE: Oval in shape, red spider mites may be green, yellow or red. They attack the undersides of leaves. Silvery or white webs may be seen. Yellow or brown specks may be noticed on the tops of the leaves. Plant may appear dull.

Treatment for all mites: Spray with dicofol (Kelthane) each 5 to 7 days until plant recovers.

Prevention: Drench plants every six months or spray with dicofol. When infestation is severe, discard plants.

ROOT NEMATODES: Microscopic worms. Suck juices from roots. May be noticed as knots or lumps in the roots. Plants wilt and turn an unhealthy yellow. Plants may be attacked by crown rot at this point. Nematodes can travel over wet surfaces and infect other plants.

Treatment: Badly infected plants should be discarded. A drench may be applied using a solution of dimethoate. Repeat drench in 7 days. Then make another drench 7 days later.

Leaf cuttings that have not touched the soil are safe to use.

SCALE: Scale insects are small, oval, or round unusual shaped insects of one-sixteenth to three-eighth (1/16 to 3/8) inches in diameter. Scale has a hard covering which protects them from poisons. Insects may be white, black, brown, or grey. May be found in unsterilized soil or pots. They suck juices from plants. Scales secrete honeydew that is very sticky. The honeydew may serve as host to SOOTY MOLD. Plant becomes stunted and unhealthy. Plant will die unless treatment is taken.

Treatment: Malathion or Orthene solution used as spray or drench. Repeat every 5-7 days until insects are no longer seen.

Prevention: Spray plants once a month with house and garden spray.

SOIL MEALY BUG: White insects one-sixteenth (1/16) inch long resembling grains of rice. Can go from plant to plant when watered in community trays. Unsterlized soil is a source of these insects. Plants become wilted and show unhealthy color. Crown rot may infect the plants. Leaf cuttings which have not touched the soil may be used.

Treatment: Spray every ten days with Malathion or Orthene solution. Repeat every seven to ten days for two months.

Preventative: Spray with malathion or orthene solution every six months.

SPRING TAILS: One-fifth (1/5) inch long thread-like insects. With a special appendage, these insects are able to jump quite high. They live on the surface of the soil, or you may see them in the water given to your plant. Although they do not generally harm African violets, a large infestation can harm the roots of the plant.

Treatment: One cup of household bleach in a quart of hot soapy water used as a drench will kill these insects.

Prevention: Sterilize soil and pots.

THRIPS: Pale yellow to tan, they can jump or crawl when disturbed. These are sucking insects. Thrips pollinate flowers. Spilled pollen is often the first sign noticed of the presents of thrips.

Treatment: A cotton swab dipped in alcohol will kill the insects when they are touched. For heavy infestation, drench plant in solution of malathion or spray. Disbud plant, flowers, and buds. Treat every five to seven days until thrips are no longer seen. Spray the surface of the soil with malathion or Orthene to kill nymphs. Remove all flowers and buds of the infested plant.

Prevention: Drench every six months with malathion or spray once a month with house and garden spray. Use No Pest strips.

WHITE FLIES: White, almost triangular or oval in shape may be seen on plants and under leaves. These are 1/16 inch long. They suck juices. Leaves may turn pale green, yellow then die. Honeydew is also secreted by these insects and this may serve as host for SOOTY MOLD, a black fungus.

Prevention: spray once a month with house and garden insect spray. Treat the undersides of leaves.

DISEASES OF AFRICAN VIOLETS:

BOTRYTIS BLIGHT OR GRAY MOLD BLIGHT: High humidity and poor air circulation may cause the start of Botrytis Blight. The gray mold appears on buds and blooms causing them to turn brown and mushy. Leaves may turn brow and rot.

Treatment: Remove diseased or dead flowers and leaves. Give plants space and make sure leaves do not touch another plant's leaves. Spray with Benomyl as directed on the manufacturer's instructions. Botrytis blight is often carried by mites. Check plants for signs of mite and treat accordingly. Add fan to plant room.

CROWN ROT: Crown rot is caused by too frequent watering. Plants wilt, sometimes gradually, sometimes rapidly because roots are dying. Plant's center turns brown. Plant's leaves are covered with webbing; center leaves rot.

Treatment: Discard any plant that is severely infected. For other plants, repot using fresh soil. Add a fungicide such as benomyl to the new, fresh soil. Do not over water.

DAMPING OFF: This is a fungal disease. It appears on leaf cuttings and small plants often from seed rot. Plant will die.

Treatment: Benlate drench one-to-one-and-one-half teaspoons to one gallon water.

GREEN SLIME: Caused by over watering and lack of air circulation

Treatment: Simply wipe pots clean when slime is evident. Be very careful with watering. Give plants sufficient space between each other for circulation. Use an electric fan for air movement but do not allow fan to face plants.

PETIOLE ROT: (EFFLORESCENCE) Caused when leaf and leaf stalk come into contact with fertilizer salts. Orange or rust colored formations may be seen on the soil or the pot.

Treatment: Cut affected leaf. Flush water over the top of the root ball to rid it of accumulated fertilizer salts.

POWDERY MILDEW: White powdery fungus that appears on leaves and stems. High humidity, poor air circulation, and temperature changes promote powdery mildew which is airborne spores.

Treatment: Spray with benomyl. Lightly dust plants once a week with a product that contains folpet or provide good air circulation by allowing a fan to work 24 hours a day in plant area. Little saucers of sulfer may inhibit powdery mildew. A home-made recipe is to brush milk on the places affected. A home-made recipe of sprinkling cinnamon on the areas is effective but is not easy to clean off.

RING SPOT: Yellow round spots caused by using cold water or when direct sunlight shines on wet leaves. These can not be removed.

Treatment: Use room temperature water for watering and fertilizing.

STUNT DISEASE: Plant does not grow or bloom. If it blooms, blossoms are small, petioles short. Center leaves do not develop.

Treatment: No known remedy. Symptoms could indicate root damage by symphylids (garden centipedes).

PHYTOPTHORA: Nick-named "Sudden Black Death" because this strikes the center of the plant turning it black. It then spreads throughout the plant causing it to collapse. This can happen in 24 hours and is deadly.

Treatment There is a treatment for phytopthora, ALIETTE, but this is available only to greenhouses. When you have a plant that you believe to have phytopthora, haste fully pitch the plant into the garbage before the disease has time to spread.

PYTHIUM: This is a soil-borne disease which attacks the crown then makes leaves whitish looking. Leaves and flower stalks become black although leaf stalk and blade remain green. The leaves then fall off the plant.

Treatment: Plants affected have little chance of recovery. Sterilization of soil may prevent this.

VIRUS DISEASE: It is difficult to accurately diagnosis virus disease since the symptoms resemble others when plants are infected with insects. Leaves are mottled green and white and green and yellow. Some are spotted and show a mosaic pattern. Occasionally TOBACCO MOSIAC DISEASE is mentioned. I believe this is just being called "virus disease" now.

BLEACHED LEAVES: Too much light, too low fertility, or lack of trace elements may be the cause. Chelated fertilizer may help.

BRITTLE LEAVES: It is possible that soil lacks magnesium or sulfer, possibly both.

BROWNED CENTERS: Over fertilizing, soil pH, or water spilled in crown.

BROWN SPOTS ON LEAVES: Watering with cold water, chilling of the plants, or water being trapped in the crown may cause this.

BUDS BUT NO BLOOM: Too low humidity or an infestation. Add dolomite limestone to soil to increase calcium.

BUDS DRY UP: Low humidity, poor air circulation, change of environment.

BUNCHED OR TIGHT CENTERS: Possibly due to sudden chilling or overexposed to lights.

DOUBLE TROUBLE: Double flowered varieties do not produce as well as singles. They may need better light, higher humidity, and more plant food, perhaps more water when in bloom.

EARTHWORMS: Drench the soil with Nemagone 50 if available.

Keep these pages handy. Gather more information to them.

Planting by Moon Signs

Moon in Aries

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds, pests, etc., and for cultivating.

Moon in Taurus

Productive and moist, earthy and feminine. Used for planting many crops, particularly potatoes and root crops, and when hardiness is important. Also used for lettuce, cabbage, and similar leafy vegetables.

Moon in Gemini

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds and pests, and for cultivation.

Moon in Cancer

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. This is the most productive sign, used extensively for planting and irrigation.

Moon in Leo

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. This is the most barren sign, used only for killing weeds and for cultivation.

Moon in Virgo

Barren and moist, earthy and feminine. Good for cultivation and destroying weeds and pests.

Moon in Libra

Semi-fruitful and moist, airy and masculine. Used for planting many crops and producing good pulp growth and roots. A very good sign for flowers and vines. Also used for seeding hay, corn fodder, etc.

Moon in Scorpio

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Nearly as productive as Cancer; used for the same purposes. Especially good for vine growth and sturdiness.

Moon in Sagittarius

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for planting onions, seeding hay, and for cultivation.

Moon in Capricorn

Productive and dry, earthy and feminine. Used for planting potatoes, tubers, etc.

Moon in Aquarius

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for cultivation and destroying noxious growths, weeds, and pests.

Moon in Pisces

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Used along with Cancer and Scorpio, especially good for root growth.

November Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase	
1 Mon. 9:53 am	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd	
2 Tue.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd	
3 Wed. 10:32 pm	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
4 Thu.	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
5 Fri.	Leo	Fire	Barren	4th	12:53 am
6 Sat. 10:00 am	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th	
7 Sun.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th	
8 Mon. 6:23 pm	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th	
9 Tue.	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th	
10 Wed. 11:05 pm	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th	
11 Thu.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th	
12 Fri.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	New	9:27 am
13 Sat. 12:56 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	1st	
14 Sun.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	1st	
15 Mon. 1:33 am	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st	
16 Tue.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st	
17 Wed. 2:39 am	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st	
18 Thu.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st	
19 Fri. 5:38 am	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd	12:50 am
20 Sat.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd	
21 Sun. 11:11 am	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd	
22 Mon.	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd	
23 Tue. 7:16 pm	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd	
24 Wed.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd	
25 Thu.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd	
26 Fri. 5:25 am	Gemini	Air	Barren	Full	3:07 pm
27 Sat.	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd	
28 Sun. 5:10 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd	
29 Mon.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd	
30 Tue.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd	

December Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase	
1 Wed. 5:50 am	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
2 Thu.	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
3 Fri. 6:00 pm	Virgo	Earth	Barren	3rd	
4 Sat.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th	7:53 pm
5 Sun.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th	
6 Mon. 3:46 am	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th	
7 Tue.	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th	
8 Wed. 9:43 am	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th	
9 Thu.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th	
10 Fri. 11:54 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	4th	
11 Sat.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	New	8:29 pm
12 Sun. 11:42 am	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st	
13 Mon.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st	
14 Tue. 11:10 am	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st	
15 Wed.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st	
16 Thu. 12:24 pm	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	1st	
17 Fri.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	1st	
18 Sat. 4:52 pm	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd	11:40 am
19 Sun.	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd	
20 Mon.	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd	
21 Tue. 12:52 am	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd	
22 Wed.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd	
23 Thu. 11:32 am	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd	
24 Fri.	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd	
25 Sat. 11:38 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	2nd	
26 Sun.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	Full	10:06 am
27 Mon.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd	
28 Tue. 12:14 pm	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
29 Wed.	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
30 Thu.	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd	
31 Fri. 12:33 am	Virgo	Earth	Barren	3rd	

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ALL ABOUT POTTING MIX

by Sue Gardner

When we make a potting mix, we create an artificial soil structure to support plants and allow roots to absorb water and necessary nutrients.

The experts say that for good plant growth, potting mix should consist of solid particles, water, and air spaces. Air in potting mixes is particularly important. To meet these requirements, we use a variety of ingredients in a range of particle sizes. Let's look at the various components we can use in potting mix and see how they fulfill our plants' needs.

PEAT

Milled Sphagnum peat moss contains small pore spaces and can hold up to eight times its weight of water. It is usually slightly acid. Milled peat has no disease suppression properties.

COIR PEAT

Coir is the pithy material produced from coconut husks. It is usually dried and compressed into blocks. Coir is not water repellent, which is an advantage. However, it can hold more water than peat moss. Care must be taken when using it in potting mix to avoid waterlogging. It breaks down faster than peat moss so can fill air spaces more quickly. A little gypsum added to coir mixes prevents calcium deficiency.

PERLITE

Perlite is a white larval rock. It comes in various particle sizes. Coarse grades are useful for creating air spaces in potting mixes. Avoid using the dust produced when perlite has been crushed. Some growers wash perlite (to remove dust) before using in potting mix.

VERMICULITE

Vermiculite is expanded mica. Each particle consists of layers which can hold moisture and fertilizers. It has less air capacity than perlite.

POTTING MIXES FOR AFRICAN VIOLETS

We mix peat, vermiculite, and perlite in equal quantities to make potting mix for African violets and most Gesneriads. pH is adjusted to 6.5 with dolomite lime. This mix will support plants and hold sufficient water for healthy growth. It will also contain enough small, medium, and large particles to ensure air spaces are present.

IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS PORE SIZES IN POTTING MIX

It is recommended that potting mixes contain 60 to 80% pore space. This may seem a large amount, but about 35% of that pore space is filled by water. After drainage, water is held in small pore spaces and attached in a film around particles. The larger pore spaces are filled with air. It is recommended that, after drainage, air makes up 20 to 25% of potting mixes to reduce the occurrence of fungal disease Phytophthora, which causes root rot.

The diagram below illustrates potting mix with a variety of particle sizes. Small and large pores are visible. If only small pores were present, very little air would be held, as those pores would be filled with water. But if all the pores were large, not much water would be held. Also, if all the pore spaces were small, the roots of plants would find it hard to push through the mix. So, potting mix is best when it contains a variety of particle sizes. The roots of plants can then obtain the water and oxygen they need to grow and function.

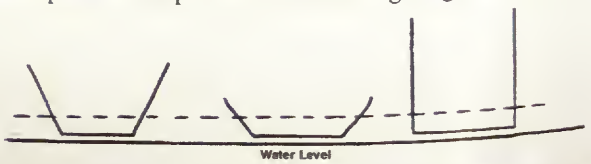
Compaction reduces pore spaces, causing poor growth. We are advised to tap a pot on a flat surface to shake down potting mix around plants. It is not a good idea to compress the mix by pressing it down too hard.

WATERLOGGING

Waterlogging can be a problem with African violet potting mixes. It is best to keep potting mix moist, not dry or waterlogged.

If we top water, we must remember to drain the pot properly. Shallow pots which are great for the shallow root system of African violets can hold a lot of water if we only allow the excess water to just run out and leave it at that.

Shallow pots hold more water per pot than taller ones. If the same potting mix is placed in three pots of different shapes, water added then allowed to drain naturally, the saturated level of potting mix in the bottom is the same in each pot despite the shape. See the following diagram.



You need to place a pot on absorbent paper such as newspaper or paper towel to properly drain excess water. It

needs to be "sucked out" by contact with the absorbent surface.

Other tips to avoid waterlogging

1. If using coir in potting mix, increase the amount of coarse perlite to increase air spaces.
2. Avoid compaction of mix.
3. Re-pot after 6 months as peat breaks down and fills air spaces.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN POTTING MIX DRIES OUT?

Potting mix contains peat moss which swells and holds much water when wet. When it dries out it shrinks. This leaves a gap between the mass of potting mix and the pot. If the plant is then top watered, most water will run down in the gap and not wet the mix. Care must be taken to ensure all the potting mix is moistened. If the pot contains a wick, it will not operate unless the potting mix and wick are wet to start with.

pH AND POTTING MIX

The pH of potting mix should be approximately 6.5. This is to ensure that fertilizer can be utilized by our plants. We add dolomite lime to raise the pH to that level, as peat is usually more acid. If you find the potting mix in a pot has become too acid, it is best to re-pot the plant. If this is not possible, you can add a slurry of dolomite in water to the pot. A very dilute solution of ammonia can be used, but be careful. Too much ammonia can be toxic.

If the potting mix becomes too alkaline and repotting is not an option, water the plant with a solution of vinegar. Use 1 tablespoon per quart of water.

DISEASES IN POTTING MIX

Fungal infections in potting mix can cause root and stem rot. Not all fungi are pathogenic. Some are normally present in soil and potting mix and assist in breakdown of material. Those fungal diseases which cause rot flourish when potting mix is waterlogged. Very cold temperatures do not assist evaporation of water and contribute to waterlogging.

Sphagnum peat (unmilled) has some resistance to fungi and bacteria, so is useful for striking cuttings prone to rot.

PESTS IN POTTING MIX

Soil Mealy Bug

The most harmful pest found in potting mix is the dreaded soil mealy bug. The only way to quickly and definitely eradicate these pests is to take crown cuttings and throw out the infected material. After the cuttings have rooted, check to be sure that the pot contains no further pests.

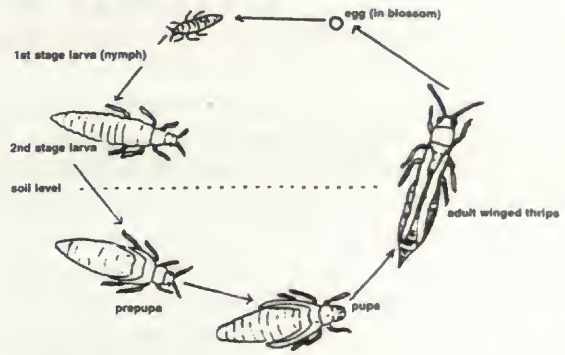
The soil mealy bug lays eggs in potting mix. The eggs hatch as nymphs which have a voracious appetite and extract sap from the roots of the plant. A few days later when engorged with sap, they secrete a white waxy mealy coating or cocoon which is distinctive. This metamorphoses into a wingless female or winged male which can move from plant to plant.

Thrips

Another insect which has part of its life cycle within the potting mix is thrips. Thrips are usually noticed in flowers where the eggs hatch into nymphs and feed on pollen.

By spraying plants and removing flowers, not all thrips are removed. Spraying at intervals of a week may gradually eliminate the problem, but dousing the potting mix as well will certainly help.

LIFE CYCLE OF THRIPS SHOWING



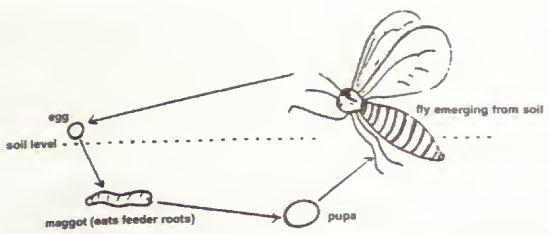
STAGES WITHIN POTTING MIX

If you tap a pollen sac on a flower infected with thrips, the larval stage can be seen running across the petals. They are approximately 0.059" long.

The stages within the potting mix are difficult to see and are usually noted only with a microscope. Sometimes, adult thrips can be seen crawling in the crown of an African violet, no doubt on their way to laying eggs in immature flower buds.

FUNGUS GNATS

These occur sporadically. The adult flies can be seen flying around plants after foliage has been disturbed. The adults lay eggs on the potting mix surface. After hatching, the larvae eat tiny feeder roots of plants, leaving scars and holes where bacterial or fungal diseases can follow.



The gnats can occasionally damage crowns inducing fungal disease. Adult gnats can be killed with a burst of pyrethrum spray, and this usually keeps them in check. Yellow sticky traps will catch flying gnats.

STORAGE OF POTTING MIX

Legionella longbeachae is the bacteria harmful to humans that has been found in potting mix based on composted wood waste. It is unlikely to be in peat based mixes. All potting mixes contain microbes, but few are harmful. As inhalation is the primary source of problems in humans, potting mix is best kept moist (not saturated).

What about the white or grey mold often seen on the surface of stored potting mix? This is a sign of a healthy mix.

Air should be maintained in a potting mix. It is usually alright if not heavily compacted by squashing. If you are storing potting mix for any length of time, give it a stir every few weeks to keep it aerated. This prevents anaerobic bacteria from growing and causing problems of toxicity and acidity. If you remove potting mix periodically from a bag, no problems should develop.

Reference: Growing Media (Handreck & Black)

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn AV Group, Australia

Crown and Root Rot

by Marge Huntley

These are caused by a pathogen. The fungus invades the root system. The first sign is that the plant appears to need watering, but if you lift the pot, you will find that it feels unusually heavy. But you probably won't test it in this way. You will probably water the plant. This of course, will make the problem worse. Much of the root system has been destroyed so the plant is unable to take up water.

Causes

- Too deep a pot so the roots of the plant cannot use all the water the pot will hold;
- Allowing the plant to have become dry thus destroying the fine hair roots. Then, when it is watered in the normal way the soil will remain saturated;
- The temperature may be too cold;
- The soil may be too heavy and not provide sufficient aeration.

The plant suffering root or crown rot will often appear dull and dark. When a leaf is gently tugged it will break away. You will see that the base of the leaf is brown. Often the whole crown will break off the plant. If you wish to replant any part of the crown, all mushy brown matter must be removed. The cutting should be grown on the dry side with the protection of a plastic bag.

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn AV Group, Inc., Australia

MINIATURE SINNINGIAS

by Gwen Goodship

Many years ago I was sent a gift leaf in an order of *Saintpaulia* leaves from a hobby grower in Buckinghamshire (unfortunately no longer with us). It was labeled *Sinningia* 'Dollbaby', and all I was told was to grow it the same way as I did saintpaulias.

Well, this was the first time I had grown another gesneriad from leaf and I did as I had been told. It did not grow like a *Saintpaulia* in that it did not produce babies! All I could see was that the leaf stalk base swelled into a small tuber and nothing else happened for several months. I kept the compost barely moist. Then, suddenly, a shoot appeared from the tuber which was in a 2 1/2" pot.

The small leaves spread out into a crown of 3" diameter, then came the bud on a thin 3" stalk and opened to a small slipper-type bloom of lavender with a cream speckled purple throat. I took it to a meeting, and the then Treasurer, Charles Pringle, was most interested in S. 'Dollbaby'. So much so that he showed me how to set seed on it, which I shared with him when it ripened.

That was long ago, but since then I have grown many of the miniature sinningia, many from seed from America. The tiniest species have leaves barely 1/4" in diameter with equally tiny blooms and are happy to grow in no larger than a 2" pots. Their hybrids are about the same size. There are those needing no larger than a 2 1/2" pot, such as 'Super Red', 'Cindyella' and Dollbaby.

Sinningia leaves can be smooth, glossy, or very hairy, and come in a wide range of shades of green. Blooms also come in different shapes - slipper, tubular, hooded tubular, and pouched, as well as in colors ranging through purple to lavender, red to orange to pink and white. All can have spots and/or stripes in the throat.

AVSA's BEST VARIETY LIST FOR 2004

Floyd Lawson, 20719 Madrona Av., Torrance, CA 90503
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Welcome to AVSA's 2004 Best Variety List. Thank you to all who participated by regular mail and e-mail. The response this year was very strong. Even though I cannot answer each one, your comments and support are deeply appreciated.

Again this year, we list each of the top Twenty-five (26 because of a tie) favorites with their descriptions from AVSA's First Class computer data base. Also included are the 14 top vote getters after the Best 26. Many have asked about species and the List. Yes, they are counted. The top species this year was ***S. shumensis*** (S 3) 1955 (B. Burtt). Now to YOUR choices for the past year! Read the list, read the descriptions, and choose your new favorite for your collection.

Irish Flirt (7577) 11/07/1991 (S. Sorano) Double bright green and white frilled star. Medium green, wavy. Semiminiature

Ness' Crinkle Blue (8136) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double dark blue star/thin white edge. Dark green, quilted, serrated/red back. Semiminiature

Rainbow's Quiet Riot (R. Wasmund) Semidouble blue-purple large star/white fantasy. Dark green, round, scalloped. Standard

Picasso (6924) 10/04/1988 (M. Tremblay) Double light blue/white fantasy. Variegated medium green, plain/silver-green back. Large

Ode to Beauty (7677) 02/28/1992 (G. Cox/B. Johnson) Semidouble medium coral star/thin raspberry band, white edge. Dark green, plain, quilted. Large

Frozen in Time (S. Sorano) Single white sticktite cupped green and white fantasy, darker green edge. Variegated medium green and white. Standard

Blue Dragon (S. Sorano) Semidouble-double pale blue large frilled star/darker eye, red-purple band, variable green edge. Dark green. Large

The Alps (7813) 10/03/1992 (K. Horikoshi/H. Sawara) Single-semidouble chimera white pansy/light blue stripe. Medium green, plain, quilted. Standard

Harbor Blue (6174) 02/24/1986 (T. Weber) Single light blue/darker eye. Dark green, plain/red back. Large

Precious Pink (6025) 07/05/1985 (H. Pittman) Semidouble pink. Variegated, plain. Semiminiature

Rebel's Splatter Kake (8695) 01/31/1998 (R. Bann) Single-semidouble pink large fluted star/darker eye, purple fantasy, white-green edge. Medium green, spooned, quilted, glossy, serrated/red back. Large

Orchard's Bumble Magnet (8479) 08/21/1996 (R. Wilson) Double pink star. Medium green, plain, pointed. Miniature

Milky Way Trail (7169) 08/01/1989 (J. Stahl) Single-semidouble white pansy. Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted. Semiminiature trailer

Pixie Blue (2598) 09/16/1974 (L. Lyon) Single purple-blue/darker center. Plain, ovate. Miniature trailer

Powwow (7708) 06/15/1992 (K. Stork) Semidouble red pansy. Variegated green and cream, plain. Standard

Mickey Mouse (H. Inpijn) Double dark blue. Dark green, pointed/red back. Miniature

Bob Serbin (8292) 09/21/1995 (J. Brownlie) Semidouble red sticktite pansy/thin white edge. Dark green, quilted, serrated/red back. Standard

Granger's Wonderland (3419) 05/01/1978 (Eyerdom) Semidouble light blue frilled. Plain, ruffled. Large

Rob's Sticky Wicket (6467) 01/27/1987 (R. Robinson) Semidouble light fuchsia. Medium green, pointed. Semiminiature trailer

Rob's Boolaroo (8053) 03/05/1994 (R. Robinson) Semidouble light pink sticktite pansy/bright blue fantasy. Medium green, quilted. Semiminiature trailer

Tiger (3433) 06/01/1978 (I. Fredette) Semidouble dark blue-violet. Variegated. Large

Tomahawk (7269) 01/22/1990 (K. Stork) Semidouble-double bright red. Dark green, plain. Large

Happy Cricket (5726) 04/29/1984 (Painesville Town & Country AVS/R. Hollada) Double lavender two-tone frilled. Dark green, ruffled/red back. Large

Cirelda (3620) 03/01/1979 (P. Tracey) Double pink two-tone. Quilted. Semiminiature trailer

Ness' Satin Rose (8144) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double rose-mauve two-tone star. Dark green, quilted, scalloped/red back. Semiminiature

Marching Band (8645) 07/18/1997 (K. Stork) Single-semidouble hot pink pansy/raspberry-red sparkle edge. Dark green, plain/red back. Large

Runners up: Aca's Red Ember, Melodie Kimi, Nortex's Snowkist Haven, Rob's Fuddy Duddy, Optimara Rose Quartz, Lela Marie, Ness' Orange Pekoe, Wrangler's Dixie Celebration, Smooch Me, Fisherman's Paradise, Ness' Viking Maiden, Optimara Little Moonstone, Optimara Ontario, Rob's Boogie Woogie, Windy Day.

JUST ONE VIOLET

The History of the Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses on its 50th Anniversary

by Kathy Garbarino

It was just one African violet that not only changed the life of one individual, but also the entire African violet world.

Lyndon Lyon's early life was not an easy one. His schooling went only as far as the 8th grade, and he found himself limited to odd jobs, most of them working on farms. He had been known to say that he didn't dare sit down during the day, or he'd fall asleep and not get up. Lyndon had a love of nature, however, and had tried his hand at many things, such as bee keeping and even raising rabbits, but never really seemed to find his niche in life. Then one day a fateful event happened, and the rest is history.

Lyndon received an African violet as a gift from his niece in 1949. A simple gift, but the plant absolutely fascinated him. He was intrigued with all there was to know about this wondrous plant, and he set about putting leaves down, getting babies and more plants from those babies, and generally learning all he could about the culture and care of these little beauties.

He soon discovered that he had a real passion for growing African violets. He had acquired so many plants that the entire second floor of his house became filled with them. Lyndon decided to start selling some of his plants to the public and started his first greenhouse right in his home in 1949. There were four rooms on the second floor, and every room and every inch of space was used for this hobby that was quickly turning into a vocation.

His son, Robert, was studying forestry, and Lyndon dove into his son's books to learn the principles of genetics. Captivated by this subject, Lyndon began crossing varieties of plants to produce new and different creations. At that time, hybridizers were seriously vying for the claim of the first double pink blossom. In 1939 the first double had been sported from 'Blue Boy', and a year later, in 1940, another 'Blue Boy' sport had produced pink blossoms. But still no double and pink together in one plant. The race was on. Many hybridizers were trying without success. Lyndon jumped into the competition late in the game and was lucky enough to be first to create one!

In 1954, he presented his new creation, aptly named 'Double Bountiful' at the AVSA convention in St. Louis, Missouri, where it caused quite a stir. Baxter Greenhouse, based in Ohio, approached Lyndon and purchased the plant from him for one thousand dollars, which was quite a bit of money at that time. They immediately renamed the violet 'Ohio Bountiful' and sold its leaves for ten dollars a piece.

Finally, Lyndon accepted a contract with Fisher Greenhouse in New Jersey, which gave him royalties on the profits of the plant. It seemed that everyone wanted a double pink blossom!

These royalties allowed Lyndon to build his first real greenhouse and to devote all of his time to growing, selling, and making new crosses and varieties to share with the African violet world. It was a family affair, with everyone pitching in and helping. Many of his nieces worked for him, and with that volume of help, the business soon took off. In 1959, they were able to expand again, and the greenhouse took the general shape of what it looks like today.

Lyndon Lyon was a real innovator, and in the forties was believed to be the first person on the east coast to utilize lighting in the growing of African violets. He used lights in his home greenhouse, and eventually applied the same principles in his new establishment as well. He figured out a way to put lights under his plant benches, an ingenious method of getting more violet growing space.

Lyndon's grandson, Paul Sorano, eventually took over the business in 1982, and has his own stories to tell of how he got into the family business. Paul remembers as far back as twelve helping with family chores of repotting, putting down seeds, seedlings, and truly a "hands-on" education in the business.

Paul remembers his grandfather spraying the greenhouse shading paint on the outside of the greenhouse glass. Paul had asked him, "How do you know how much is the right amount to use?" Lyndon's answer was, "You just know." Paul now is asked that same question, and when he replies, "You just know," he smiles, thinking of his grandfather.

Paul didn't immediately follow the family tradition of growing African violets. He studied electronics and worked at General Electric for a time. In the 1970's, there was a "plant" boom, with the African violet becoming extremely popular. Paul attributes this partially to the oil embargo at that time. He feels that more people developed hobbies, such as growing plants, to keep them occupied at home. In 1974 he joined the Lyndon Lyon Greenhouse staff, and when his grandfather wanted to retire in 1982, Paul stepped in as owner.

In 1987, Paul introduced orchids into the greenhouse and finally understood the "hooked" feeling that people have when they buy African violets. He had to buy every orchid he could get his hands on. He is again concentrating on violets, although visitors see many beautiful orchids in the greenhouse.

His "crew" consists of Debbie Herringshaw, hybridizer and manager, and his daughter, Kristi, who is in charge of mail orders. Both Debbie and Kristi are essential to his business. Paul has plenty to do at the greenhouse, and still is able to speak to clubs, promote the AVSA through workshops, show his plants, and introduce new varieties.

He has won Best New Cultivar for three years in a row at AVSA National Shows.

2002 - 'Optical Illusion'
2003 - 'Neon Fantasy'
2004 - 'Warm Sunshine'

Paul is always trying to improve his varieties. When asked what he enjoys most about his job, he explains that when hybridizing, it is quite a thrill to see babies that are a new creation unfurling for the first time. He is always working on enhancing the unique qualities of his plants, such as getting more yellow into the flowers, bigger blooms, and nicer foliage.

The complexion of the African violet business is changing. What used to be primarily a walk-in business has become more of a mail order business, thanks to the popularity of the Internet. The greenhouse does have about three times as many plants as shown in the Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses catalog, or his website, so it is well worth the trip to see his amazing place! The website is www.lyndonlyon.com which will give you information on how to order plants and also directions to visit the main greenhouse.

Paul owes much to his grandfather's early accomplishments. In 1999 Lyndon Lyon was inducted into the AVSA Hall of Fame, having previously won the Bronze Medal for his achievements in hybridizing. Paul was honored to accept his grandfather's award. One month later, Lyon died at age 94. Paul was comforted to know that his grandfather was aware of this prestigious award commemorating his accomplishments before he died.

As we look back on this 50th anniversary of the Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses, we realize that Lyndon Lyon was already fifty years old when he started this business. He gave the world thirty years of his expertise, almost eight hundred different varieties of African violets, and a wealth of knowledge about this field. All of this from just one African violet, the double pink!

The Mystic pH

by Ron Smith

What a favorite subject, used by some to dazzle others with eloquence. Perhaps it is one of the most important elements in African Violet growing and could be one basic principle that gets the least attention and consideration.

What is this mystic pH? Why is it called pH? Not Ph or even ph. Well, it's all to do with a method that originated in France whereby the relative strength of an acid solution could be measured and recorded. In French it is *pouvoir hydrogen* (Hydrogen power), indicating the hydrogen ion concentration of a solution. Yes, it is as simple as that; it is a scale to indicate the acid or alkaline strength in solution just like temperature is read from a thermometer.

With this system, we are able to measure the pH factor in any solution or mixture. In addition, we are able to decide that whether the mix, solution, or water is to the African violet's liking.

How does the measuring scale of pH go? The scale is divided in steps from 0 to 14. Each step is then divided again into 10 smaller steps. So between pH 6.0 and pH 7.0 there are 10 further divisions, for example, 6.0, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and so on up to 7.0.

- Acidity goes from pH 0 which equals strong acid to pH 6 which indicates weak acid.
- Pure water is measured at pH 7.
- Alkalinity is measured from pH 8 weak to pH 14 strong.

So how do I relate all of this pH business to my little African violet?

We are all well aware that although the plants roots are anchored in a potting mix and it is receiving the correct nutrients, if the plant does not have warmth, air, light, and water, the plant will not grow. It is obvious that each of these elements have a perfection area so get all of them correct and the African violet will grow to perfection.

Now let us imagine that the warmth, air, and light conditions are in every way to the plant's liking, but the pH level of the potting mix and fertilizer solution is way out. Then all of your efforts are wasted. So now we can start to look at what the pH (acid content of the soil mix and the solution of nutrients) is all about and why it is so important.

African violets love a potting mix that tests to a pH (acidity figure) of 6.8 and it will tolerate pH slightly higher or lower - say between 6.4 and 7.0.

Why? It all comes down to the fact that most plants in the world grow best in certain conditions that are to their liking. This choice is not an accident; it is all to do with what food - nutrients - they need to grow. Basically an imitation of their original environment and habitat.

What we do not realize is that in the potting mix there is a very complex processing factory run by millions and millions of workers - microorganisms - that are constantly converting the fertilizers - nutrients -which have been added to the potting mix, into a food that the African violet uses to grow. These microorganisms can only work to perfection if the temperature and the pH levels are correct.

If the soil mix is too hot or too cold, the microorganisms go on strike for better living conditions. The plant suffers because food is not processed, and in consequence, is not available.

If the pH level is not in the acceptable range, then microorganisms find it difficult to process some of the chemicals. It is similar to making a cake. If you do not have all the ingredients in the correct amount, no cake.

Microorganisms can only process fertilizers - nutrients - into available plant food when the acid content (pH) is correct for that specific chemical. If the pH is not in the range for the processing of that chemical, then the production line stops, so again no food for the plant.

How often do we see plants with very light green leaves on a show bench? We usually say "lack of iron". The grower may say, "Well, I gave it the usual fertilizer". Could it be that the pH of the potting mix is not in the necessary range, and the microorganisms can not process the iron into plant food?

As general guidelines it can be said that chemicals can only be processed as follows:

- Below pH 6.5, nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and trace elements become unavailable because they cannot be processed.
- Above 7.5, phosphorous, iron, manganese, boron, copper, and zinc also become unavailable.

So now we can understand that the pH of the soil and water is a very important element to African violet growing. You can do everything 100% correct, but if the pH of the soil is not correct, then all those micro organisms will not be operating the processing factory for you.

pH testing is very simple, and a test kit for potting mix which contain all the directions for its use can be obtained quite cheaply at most garden centers. There is also a test kit available for water so that fertilizer solutions can be tested. These are usually available from stores that deal with hydroponics or aquariums.

One further thought; by all means, get your pH correct for potting mix but be careful with the pH of the fertilizer solution. If the pH is incorrect, it can alter the pH in your potting mix. I am sure your plants will tell you.

From the *Newsletter* of the AVS of South Australia, Inc.

POTTING UP THE "BABIES"

by Marge Huntley

When plantlets have grown to about 1 1/2", tall they are ready to remove from the propagated leaf. This may be as little as three months after planting the leaf or as much as six months. When it was all new to me, I could not wait to pot up the tiny plantlets; these days I often leave them till they are rather large and well developed. In the long run, I don't think it makes much difference.

Preparation

Clumps to be divided should not be freshly watered. About four days after watering makes for a cleaner, easier job. Use newspapers to work on. (This helps with the clean-up. I put all used potting mix either into the compost heap or keep and mix with said compost for the outside potting.)

Gather together all materials needed

Pots (3" are ideal), 1 pen or soft pencil for marking pots, and wicks (I use 8 ply acrylic yarn).

Activate the answering machine or take the phone off the hook, put on some music, make a cup of coffee, and start having fun!

If you are a fairly new grower, you will probably want to pot up every single plantlet, even those without roots. They all have a good chance of growing and taking over all your space. My advice is to decide to pot up a given number only from each propagated leaf.

Prepare pots for this given number with plant name, today's date, and wick. Tip the plants from the pot. I lightly squeeze the base and out pop the contents. You may prefer to use a skewer.

Gently pull plantlets apart, selecting the strongest ones with the most roots. Remove baby leaves (those with milky stems) or any damaged leaves.

Fill pot with potting mix, make a hole in the center with your finger, and place plantlet deep enough so that the mix can be drawn in to just under the lowest leaves. Tap pot on table to settle mix. Pots should be watered with tepid water. "Plant starter" can be added to this water if you wish. Pots should now be drained well. Because I usually have a large number of babies, I place them on one of our wired trays and cover them with a dry cleaners bag for about two weeks. The bag does not touch the plants but is supported by straws or sticks, one in each corner pot. If you only have a few plants, you could do the same on a smaller scale. Anything covered with plastic should not be placed in too much direct sunlight.

Many experienced growers commence wick watering their newly divided plantlets at once. I have never done this. I prefer to wait until the plant shows that root growth has taken place - from 4-6 weeks - before placing wicks in fertilized water. I advise novice growers to always err on the side of caution.

Hints

- If plantlets are unsteady, use plastic toothpicks for support.
- Feed with a high nitrogen fertilizer.
- Remove any baby leaves which evaded you earlier.

In about three months, the plants will be ready to move on to the next size pot. They may have already flowered in their first pot. Check that flowers are the correct color as described in Master Variety List. Even with the greatest care, sometimes leaves are incorrectly labeled, and much trouble is caused if growers continue to present plants wrongly labeled.

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn AV Group, Australia

Perfect Gift!!

For that violet lover in your life (yourself included!)

The perfect gift is the CD of an AVSA national convention. CDs are available from the Tucson convention, as well as the Baton Rouge and the DC conventions. These CDs are only $9.95. (14.95 – international).

To order this perfect gift, send your check to AVSA, 2375 North Street, Beaumont TX, 77702. Make the check payable to AVSA.

Thinking Small

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In one of my first columns, I invited readers to grab a cup of coffee, or pour a cup of tea, pull up a chair, and we'd sit down and talk. Today I invite you to do the same as I have some information to share with you.

This will be the final column I write. It has been an awesomely rewarding experience. When I began, my children were small, and I often discussed their reactions to, comments about, and involvement in my "violet" hobby. These children are now 17, 15 and 11, and their interests and activities have become wide-ranging and consuming. Nine years ago I worked in my home, raising these children. Today I have a more-than full-time job which takes me away from home on a daily basis and involves frequent and lengthy overnight stays. For the past nine years, I contributed to AVSA; now I must contribute to the many people I work with and my children. It has been a wonderful nine years, and I thank all of you for your many kind, supportive, and encouraging comments through the years.

AN EDITORIAL

If there's one thing that has brought me great consternation over the years, it has been the mini-standard argument. Which is better? Which is more worthy? Truth be told, for growing purposes, it is only the individual grower who can decide this, and it should be based on their personal experience, needs, and preferences. It is highly subjective. For judging purposes, it is highly objective with a very clear scale of points. What we're looking for is sheer perfection on a number of levels. Many argue minis are easier to grow, to which you can quickly respond there are many standards which are equally easy to grow. It all depends on the individual cultivar, not its size.

The point that needs to be made is our focus as a society should be on growing something, anything, in the saintpaulia family, for that is what serves the society best. To demean any particular violet does the entire family a disservice. Growers should be encouraged to grow ALL types of violets, to become familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of each so they may find their true love and become a truly devoted grower. We should preach "There is a violet for everyone!" Yes, grow trailers! Yes, grow girl foliage! Yes, grow variegates! Yes, grow the species! Yes, try and grow them all! Not only should we be cultivating violets, but most importantly, we should cultivate the love of violets!

With that, let's pick up where I left off in July, with a discussion of the Commercial Section at the Tucson convention.

COLORFUL COMMERCIALS

Winning the AVSA Gold Rosette for Best Small Collection was Ralph Robinson of Rob's Mini-O-Lets. His 'Rob's Calpypso Beat' featured exceptionally strong color for this cultivar, with dark, hot pink blooms with a very dark purple, striped fantasy. Perfectly formed foliage framed the nosegay of blooms. 'Rob's Macho Devil' and 'Rob's Heat Wave' filled out his collection. The first is a classic cultivar, capable of winning shows, and is one of the best variegated reds. The latter is well known and widely grown for its abundant blooms of light pink with a strong raspberry edge which varies greatly with temperature. These blooms nicely contrast with very dark, almost black, shiny foliage. This popular cultivar makes an appearance in many shows because it grows so easily and blooms so well. Doris Brownlee of ACA's Violetry had the 2nd Best Small Collection with her mini collection of 'Orchard's Bumble Magnet', the extraordinary pink-blossomed performer with medium green foliage, and two well known, widely grown Pittman hybrids: 'Planet Kid', and 'Gleeful Elf'. Doris couldn't have selected better cultivars than these, as they espouse nice-forming foliage and heavy bloom count.

Other cultivars of note: 'Rob's Inner Orbit' was the 2nd Best Specimen plant in the commercial section. This plant is quite lovely and reminds me a lot of 'Precious Pink', in that it has absolutely gorgeous foliage in or out of bloom, but when in bloom it has the ability to take your breath away. It's

nicely rounded leaves variegated white, pink, and dark green are set in perfectly symmetrical fashion. The rather large blooms are a lovely shade of medium pink, with a frosted white edge. If you already grow 'Rob's Outer Orbit' (with fantasy blooms of deep blue with pink puffs and white edge), you will love this cultivar as well. A beautifully grown 'Rob's Twinkle Blue' was in the show; this tiny cultivar is simple in appearance but quite a nice performer. Tiny, dark green, pointed foliage nicely frames dark blue double blooms. It's a superb plant for miniaturizing. The unusual and very striking 'Rob's Lucky Penny' was designated the 2nd Best New Cultivar. This unique cultivar has "boxwood" shaped foliage of cream/yellow with a green stripe down the center, quite reminiscent of euonymous, and must be grown like a chimera as it will not come true from leaves. Grow this one for its unique foliage and novelty nature!

Shirley Sanders of "Shirley's House of Violets" showed several of her new hybrids. Making a big splash was 'Shirl's Hawaiian Lei', with its beautiful white with dark purple thumbprint blooms above very nice, small growing variegated foliage. Everyone wanted this luscious new cultivar! Shirley also showed 'Shirl's Ruffled Petticoat', with dark green variegated foliage topped by lovely medium lavender/purple blooms with a white ruffle. 'Shirl's Cranberry Smoothie' truly merits the name, with Tommie-Lou pink and green variegated foliage topped by luscious amounts of cranberry red blooms. Finally, many convention-goers commented on 'Shirl's Senior Moment', with its striking contrast of dark, concord-grape purple blooms against green and white heavily variegated foliage. This one will be popular!

Paul Sorano, from Lyon's Greenhouses introduced three new cultivars. The first is 'Crimson Magic' with large, dark mauve/red blooms with even darker veining, accented with a fine white edge. These single pansies were nicely framed by dark green semi foliage. 'Storybook Princess' featured light pink blooms with highly variable dark fuchsia fantasy. This too is a semimini. 'Child's Play' looked adorable with its' small pure white blooms with deep purple accents on petal tips, the pistil, and the eye, above medium green semi foliage.

A SECOND EDITORIAL AND FINAL NOTE

The world of minis and semis desperately needs hybridizers! Two years ago, in Baton Rouge, Hortense Pittman dazzled us and offered hope with her exhibition of a wide array of new cultivars. This year Shirley Sanders exhibited several of her new cultivars, about which the public showed keen interest. Gini McCanne from California (Violet Perfection by Gini) has hybridized several small ones, several of which I'm trying out. George McDonald has made tremendous strides with his "Mac's" series of minis and semis. Ralph Robinson's passion for the small ones shifted when Olive came into his life, and as for Paul Sorano, he continues to dabble in the small ones, but not enough to satisfy the needs of a demanding public. So, dabble, experiment, just try! The violet world will be grateful.

Thank you for your kind attention, I wish you good growing, and as always, take care!

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WATERING METHODS

by Marge Huntley

Top Watering

Use a watering can with a long spout so that tepid water can be applied to soil mix at several places around the pot. A baster or teapot can be used. After ten minutes, the saucer should be emptied so that the root ball does not remain too wet.

Bottom Watering

Place pot in saucer of tepid water for about twenty minutes or until soil surface moistens. Empty saucer. Disadvantage - unused fertilizer will rise to the top forming a crust on soil and pot. Leaves that touch the pot rim will rot off. This may be prevented by watering from the top with plain water, one out of four waterings.

Wick Watering

As long as the potting mix used is very light and open, this method is very satisfactory for those with a large number of plants. The wick must be made from synthetic fiber; 8 ply knitting yarn is the most favored at our club. Venetian blind cords are also used by many growers. In the early days of wick watering, nylon stockings were cut into rings, then into strips and stretched to make wicks.

It is put into the bottom of the pot when the plant is potted. I spread the wick around the bottom of the pot only; some growers also pull the wick up through the mix. Don't have too long a wick hanging down as it can get caught on any number of hazards and hoisted out of the pot. The reservoir has a hole in the lid into which the wick is lowered. As long as the wick is wet, it will work. This is a good method for people who need to be absent from home for an extended period. Larger containers or trays will last for a month or more, depending on the size of plant.

Plants grown on wicks need to be flushed with plain water (leaching) regularly. Some growers don't leach; they feel that because they repot every six months it is not necessary.

Capillary Matting

Material used should again be a synthetic fiber. Acrylic blanketing, a fabric specially produced, or even layers of newspaper have been used successfully.

The matting is placed on a flat surface and saturated with water. Plant pots must have bottom holes and have flat bases. A wick can also be used. Water plants and press pots down on matting to make good contact. Mats may be kept constantly damp or allowed to dry out a little.

Plants must be leached regularly because this is another form of bottom watering. Disadvantages - Matting needs to washed at the same time as plants are leached. Fertilizer salts and algae can build up in matting. This was the reason for the use of newspaper.

Waterwells (Decorative)

These have proved to be a godsend for many who could not master the watering technique.

When potting, ensure that the watering tube in the base is well packed with no lumps of peat in the mix. Disadvantages - Mix must be leached as above. Algae build up in clear reservoir.

Texas Potting

Pots are prepared by making a row of small holes a distance up from the base of pot. The distance depends on the size of pot. For a plastic pot, I burn holes with a skewer 3/4" up from the base all around the pot. I put larger holes around the base either in the sides or underneath. Coarse perlite is added up to the line of small holes. Cuttings and plantlets grow very well in regular mix, which takes up water by capillary action from the perlite beneath. Pots are placed in a tray of water so that the line of small holes is above water level. Pots should be leached as above.

If you have a favorite watering method and you are growing nice plants with lots of bloom, don't change a thing. As in all things, the most important aspect of watering is to be consistent. Plants do not appreciate being allowed to dry out too often and then be over watered.

From the *Newsletter* of the Early Morn AV Group, Australia

Planting in an Unusual Container

by Pam Kennedy

This is one section in the show that you can really let your imagination take over. Just look in your kitchen cupboards, around the house, or even on the beach.

A shell, which will sit flat with a plant in it, a nice twisted piece of driftwood with a hole in it, or an interestingly shaped rock with enough of a depression to take a plant, would all make a very interesting display. These are things that we can find outside, but in the house, you may have a cream jug, a gravy-boat, a teapot, an egg cup, a glass, a spoon, a soap dish, a sieve, even a cup and saucer. We have had many ornaments a few years back - a china shoe was used, and even a knitted bootee won a prize last year.

There are one or two things you will need to remember if you are entering this section. You do not need to own the plant for three months or have grown it yourself. Some people buy a plant even the night before the show to put in their container. If you have a plant and a container in mind and want to plant it up early, most of the things I have mentioned do not have drainage holes so therefore you will need to put some charcoal in the bottom of your container. You may also wish to put a layer of sphagnum moss but this is optional. Watering will need to be done carefully as with no drainage it would be easy to over-water. If you do, a piece of paper towel tucked into the potting mix will help to drain away the excess. Other containers may not hold any water; it will drain off straight away for these. You will need to be very diligent at making sure the plant does not dry out.

The plant does needs to compliment the container both color and size. A mini African violet would look out of place in a standard teapot and it is also not a good idea for the flower color to clash with your container. Also, both the plant and the container need to be clean. Other Gesneriads can be used very effectively as well as African violets, so why not give it a go and let your imagination go to work?

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RECYCLING RUN AMUCK

by Sharon Holtzman

When I first started growing African violets as a hobby, I bought many of my supplies from the commercials who advertise in the back of the *African Violet Magazine*. It wasn't long until I got tired of paying all those shipping charges and started looking around my own house for things that I could use in my hobby. I patted myself on the back for doing my bit for recycling by washing out and reusing those soda bottles and deli containers.

As my hobby grew, so did my need for reservoirs, propagating containers, etc., and I began to look beyond my own trash can. Oh, and then there are those wonderful cardboard boxes that I couldn't get enough of because I just might need them for transporting plants a year after I collected them. Who is to say that "box makers" won't go on strike and I might never get that perfect box again if I left it sitting in the store, or beside that dumpster. I just ignored members of my family who called me a "compulsive garbage picker".

Before I found that you could buy the little one ounce portion cups by the hundreds at Sam's Club, I snatched up empty coffee creamers from neighboring tables at every restaurant I visited. They were perfect for putting down mini leaves ... and they were free. That came to a stop when my daughter and I were out to dinner (and my supply was running very low). I asked the waitress if she would collect them from her stations while we were having our dinner. She not only was happy to do this but also asked the other waitresses to do the same. When the pile was deposited on our table, my daughter informed me that she would not have dinner with me ever again if this practice didn't come to a halt.

I'm sure you all know how expensive packing material is when you ship things through the mail. Heck, sometimes the packing material is worth more than the items shipped. Well, one day my daughter and I were leaving a department store when I spied a plastic bag so big that I thought it might take two people to carry it, and it was filled with shredded computer paper. I swear I then knew how those settlers felt when they first struck it rich out west. I went weak in the knees! My daughter didn't say a word. Her silence was screaming, "Mom, I am not helping you lug that garbage to the car!" I had to make a decision...embarrass my daughter...grab the garbage...embarrass my daughter...grab the garbage? Well that shredded paper lasted me for months and my daughter was speaking to me again in less than a week, so I think it worked out well, don't you?

So the months and years went by, and despite the teasing from my relatives, I continued to live in "garbage picking denial". They say that you can't save any addict from their compulsion until they see the problem for themselves. I've seen the light!

I had the privilege of witnessing the birth of our grandson, Joshua. It was by far the most amazing, wonderful experience of my life. As we were approaching "Showtime" the doctor strolled into the room and took his front row seat on his little stool. I stood behind him and was covered with goose bumps as we anticipated Joshua's arrival. Just as this little baby was making his entry into this world, the doctor opened the packet containing the sterile bulb syringe... and dropped it on the floor! Imagine my shock when I realized that at this earth shattering moment of watching the birth of my grandson, I had the thought, "Darn, I'll bet they are just going to throw that bulb away, and it would be perfect for top watering miniatures. I wonder if they would let me have it?" Of course, in the moments that followed, I put that thought out of my mind and could only focus on that beautiful baby. Later in the day I realized what my relatives have been trying to tell me for years, and I admit that I am powerless over "garbage picking".

If anyone out there knows of a good Twelve Step Program for my problem, please let me know.

Happy Violeting...in moderation!

From *The Violet Connection*,
publication of the Ohio State AVS

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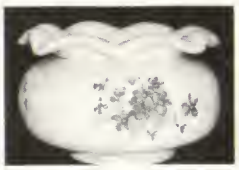

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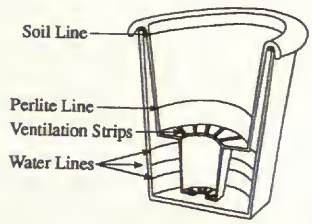

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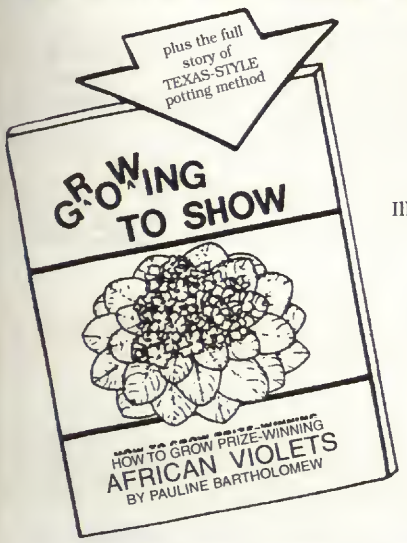
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